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TWO NOVELETTES.

II. THE BARONESS HELENA VON SAARFELD.

TRAVELLING in Germany, on one occasion, I passed the evening at a small inn among some mountains, with a middle-aged man whom I soon discovered to have been an actor. In the course of the evening he told me the outlines of the following story, together with much interesting detail relating to an actor's life. I have endeavoured to work into the story what I could recollect of his observations, but not being able to take notes at the time, and having little intimate knowledge of German life, I have lost much of the local colouring and graphic detail which interested me so much at the time. This short introduction will suffice.

In a considerable town in Germany (said the actor), there have been for several generations a succession of dukes who have patronised the German theatre and devoted the principal part of their revenue to its support. In this city I was born. My grandfather had been an actor of some repute, whose acting in some of his principal characters Schiller is said greatly to have admired. His son, however, did not follow in his father's art, but degenerated, as most would call it, into a stage-carpenter and inferior scene-painter. He was, however, a man of considerable reading,

and of a certain humour, which mostly took the form of bitter sarcasm, and dislike of the theatrical profession. From my birth he formed a determination to bring me up as a printer, for besides that his fondness for reading naturally caused him to admire the art by which books are produced, he believed that education would make gigantic steps within a few years, and that in consequence printers would never want for occupation. In this expectation, at any rate in one respect, he was mistaken.

Upon the production of a new piece which the reigning Duke had himself written, the juvenile actor who was to have taken a boy's part sickened and died, and the company did not at the moment possess any child who was fitted to take his place. My father was requested, or rather commanded, to allow me to learn the few words attached to the part. He was extremely averse to the proposal, but was compelled to consent, the matter appearing so trifling. The play was very successful. The applause was unanimous, and indeed was so enthusiastic that, not satisfied with lauding the talent of the noble author and with praising the intelligence of the chief actors who had so readily grasped the intentions of genius, it had some encomiums left for the child

actor, and discovered a profound meaning in the few words the Duke had put into my mouth, which it asserted I had clearly and intelligently rendered. The Duke, pleased at finding himself so much cleverer than even he had ever suspected, joined in the applause. He never failed to testify his approbation at the way in which I piped out the very ordinary words of my single line, and finally, when the play was withdrawn for a time, he sent an order to my father to repair one summer afternoon to the ducal Schloss which overlooked the town. I have since sometimes thought that it was curious that this play, so full of genius and of humour, was not re-acted even on this partial stage oftener than it was, and, still more so, that, in all the theatres of Germany where I have played my part, I never once saw it performed, nor even so much as heard it mentioned; so difficult of recognition is merit in my profession.

The ducal Schloss rose directly above the tall houses of the superior quarter of the town, the backs of which looked out upon forest trees which had been planted, and had grown to great size, upon the steep mountain slope upon which the Schloss was built. My father taking me by the hand led me up the winding road, defended at the angles by neglected towers, which led to the castle gardens. On the way he never ceased to impress upon me the misery of an actor's life.

"The poorest handicraft," he said, "by which a man can earn his crust of bread in quiet is preferable to this gaudy imposture which fools think so attractive. In other trades a man is very often his own master, in this he has so many that he does not even know which to obey. In other trades a man has some inducement to do his best, in this to excel is in most cases to starve. The moment an actor ceases to assist the self-love of his fellow actor, or to minister to the worst passions of his auditors, he is hated or

despised. He works harder than the simplest journeyman for poorer pay, he is exposed to greater risk of accident, and the necessities of his part require such a delicacy of organisation that the least accident ruins it." The great trunks of the trees were throwing a fitful shadow over the steep walks as my father, still holding me by the hand, poured these dolorous opinions into my ears, and we reached the long terraces of the ducal gardens.

We were passed on from one gorgeous domestic to another until at last we found ourselves before the chasseur, a magnificent man of gigantic height, but with an expression of face perfectly gentle and beautiful. I had often noticed this man in the theatre, and had always thought that he would be admirably fitted to represent St. Christopher, a picture of whom hung in my mother's room. He surveyed us courteously and kindly, and informed us that the Duke was taking his wine with a friend on one of the terraces on the farther side of the hill. Thither he led us, and we found the Duke seated at a small table in front of a stone alcove ornamented with theatrical carvings in bas-relief. The view on this side avoided the smoke of the town and commanded a magnificent prospect of wood and plain crossed by water, and intersected by low ranges of hills. The afternoon sun was gilding the tree tops and the roofs and turrets of the Schloss behind us.

The gigantic chasseur introduced us to the Duke, who sat at his wine, together with a gentleman of a lofty and kindly expression, whom I never saw before or since. On the table were wine and dried fruits. I remember the scene as though it had occurred only yesterday.

"Ah, my good Hans," said the Duke—he prided himself on his accurate acquaintance with every one attached to the theatre, and my father's name was Karl—"ah, my good Hans, I have sent for you because I have taken an interest in this little fellow, and I wish to make his fortune.

I will take his future into my hands and overlook his education in his noble profession of player."

My father looked very uncomfortable.

"Pardon, your highness!" he said, "I do not design him for a player. I wish him to be a printer."

The Duke raised his hand with a magnificent gesture as of a man who waives all discussion.

"My good fellow," he said, "that is all past. This boy has developed a talent for the highest of all possible professions. He has shown himself unconsciously appreciative of genius, and able to express it. His future is mine."

My father looked very downcast, and the gentleman who sat by the Duke, with a kindness of demeanour which has endeared him to me for ever, said :

"But this good man seems to have decided views about his own son."

"My dear Ernst," said the Duke, "on every other subject I am most willing to listen to, and to follow, your excellent advice, but on this one topic I think you will admit that I have some right to be heard. We have here," he continued, leaning back in his chair, and waving his two hands before him, so that the fingers crossed and interlaced each other, as his discourse went on, with a continuous movement which fascinated my eyes, "we have here the commencement of an actor's life. We look forward into the future and we see the possibility of an existence than which nothing more attractive presents itself to the cultured mind. What to other men is luxury, is the actor's every day life. His ordinary business is to make himself familiar with the highest efforts of the intellect of his day, but this even is not all; every movement of his life is given to the same fascinating pursuit; whenever he walks the street he is adding to his store; the most trifling incident—a passing beggar, a city crowd—presents to him invaluable hints; his very dreams

assist him; he lives in a constant drama of entralling interest; the greater stage without is reflected on the lesser stage of the theatre; his own petty individuality is the glass in which the universal intellect and consciousness mirrors itself. It is given to him of all men to collect in his puny grasp all the fine threads of human existence, and to present them evening after evening for the delight, the instruction, and the elevation of his fellow men. We have before us an individual, small it is true and at present undeveloped, before whom this future lies assured. Shall we hesitate for a moment? This worthy man, looking at things in a miserable detail, sees nothing but some few inconveniences which beset this, as every other, walk in life. It is fortunate that his child's future is not at his control."

My father said nothing more; but as he was shown off the final terrace by the least gorgeous of the domestics, he muttered to himself so low that I could only just hear him—

"We shall see what the mother will say."

But—when we reached our house, which was a lofty gabled dwelling in the poorer part of the town, but which had belonged to my grandfather and to his father before him, and had once been a residence of importance; when we climbed to the upper story and found ourselves in the large kitchen and dwelling room which commanded views both ways, into the street and to the ramparts at the back—he got no help from his wife.

My mother did not like reading, and even thought in her secret mind, though she did not say it aloud, that her husband would be much better occupied in working for his family than in puzzling his brains over the pages of Kant. She had, therefore, no great admiration for the great printers of the day, nor was Johann Gutenberg likely to replace St. Christopher over her bedside. She knew nothing of the vast stride that educa-

tion was about to make, nor of the consequent wealth that awaited the printer's craft, but she did know the theatre and she knew the Duke. That the Duke had promised to make her son's fortune was not denied; surely there was little left to desire. It was decided that night that I should be an actor.

"My son," said my father, some time afterwards, as he took me to the lodgings of an actor who had promised to teach me to repeat some famous parts, "my son, I have not been able to train thee to the occupation which I should have desired. I pray God to assist thee in that which fate has selected. I have one piece of advice which I will give thee now, though I hope I shall be able to repeat it often. Never aspire to excellence; select the secondary parts, and any fine strokes of acting which you may acquire throw into these parts. In this way you will escape the vindictive jealousy of your fellows; but if unavoidably you should attract such ill feeling, leave the theatre at once, travel as much as possible, act on as many boards as you can. You will achieve in this way the character of a useful player who is never in the way. In this way, and in this only, you probably will never want bread; more than this I cannot hope for."

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I shall not weary you by relating the story of my education as an actor; it will suffice to say that I found neither my father's estimate of the profession, nor that of the Duke, to be precisely correct. If on the one hand I have found littleness and jealousy to exist among players, on the other I have seen numberless acts of unpretending and self-denying kindness. It must be remembered that the actor's life is a most exciting and wearing one, and most certain to affect the nerves and make a man irritable and suspicious. His reputation and his means of existence are dependent upon the voice of popular applause—an applause which may be

affected by the slightest misunderstanding or error. It is no wonder therefore that he is apt to take alarm at trifles, or to resent with too much quickness what seems to be a slight or an unfairness. With regard to the Duke's ideal view of the profession, I did not find this even altogether without foundation in fact. I found, amidst all its trivialities and vexations, the player's training to give an insight into human life in all its forms, and to encourage the study and observation of the varieties of city existence more than perhaps any other training does. I studied the works of the great dramatists and novelists with attention, not only for my own parts, but that I might understand the parts of others. I followed my father's advice throughout my life. I confined myself systematically to secondary parts, but I watched carefully the acting of the great players, and endeavoured to lead up to their best effects, and to respond to the emotions they sought to awaken. By this means I became a great favourite among the best players, for it is surprising what an assistance the responsive action of a fellow actor is in obtaining an effect, while on the other hand it is very unlikely that the attention of the audience should be diverted from the principal actor by what tends indeed to increase the impression he makes. Several of the greatest actors then in Germany often refused parts unless I played the secondary character. I was not particular. I would take any part, however unimportant, provided my salary was not reduced in consequence, and I endeavoured to throw all my knowledge and training into any part I undertook; by this means I became a great favourite with authors, who, if they are worth anything, endeavour to distribute their genius equally among their characters, and whom nothing irritates so much as to see everything sacrificed to promote the applause and vain glory of a single performer. I grew up, much to the surprise of all who knew

me, a very handsome young man, and I generally took the parts of lovers, when these were not of the first importance, such, for instance, as the part of Romeo, which, true to the rule I had adopted, I never attempted. In this way I had visited most of the cities of Germany, and was well known in all of them, when, at the request of one of the chief actors of the day, who studied the parts of the great tragedies which he undertook with the most conscientious care, I accepted an engagement at the theatre of one of the great cities of the empire, to which he had also engaged himself for a considerable time.

The theatre was a large one, and the company numerous and varied. I might occupy you for a long time with divers descriptions of character and with the relation of many curious and moving incidents, but I do not wish to make this a long story, and I will therefore confine myself to the chief events.

The German stage, as you are aware, is different from your own in England, in that it does not present such marked contrasts. There is a great gulf, as I understand, between your highest actors and your pantomime players; but this is not the case in Germany. As far as I can understand, we have nothing resembling your pure pantomime, and what we have which resembles it is introduced in interludes and after pieces, and is taken part in, to a considerable extent, by the same actors who perform in the more serious pieces. There was, for instance, in the theatre to which I was attached, an old actor, named Apel, who would take the part of grave-digger in *Hamlet*, and the same evening, in the afterpiece, act the part of what you call the clown. This part on any stage is the one most liable to accidents, and this man, in the course of a long professional career, had met with several, in falling through trapdoors open through the carelessness of carpenters, or stumbling over unforeseen obstacles. These accidents

had seriously affected his physical system, and he was rapidly becoming a helpless cripple. He had one child, a daughter, who danced, for a German, with remarkable grace and agility, and sang with a rich and touching voice. Of all the avocations which necessity has forced the unhappy daughters of man to adopt—

“The narrow avenue of daily toil,
For daily bread.”

that of a pantomime dancer, who has a song, is the hardest. I have stood upon the stage by such a girl as this, and marked the panting exhaustion with which she completed her dance, and the stupendous effort with which she commenced her song. Even without the exertion of the dance I know of few things more touching than to see a girl labouring conscientiously through a long, and possibly an unattractive song, before a wearied and unsympathising audience who reck nothing of the labour, the pains, and the care which the performance involves. The girl of whom I speak, whose name was Liese, had her share, and perhaps more than her share, in this hard lot. She was a fine German girl of no particular talent, but perfectly trained; she came of a family of actors, and displayed a kindness of disposition, and a devotion which were truly German. As her father's incapacity increased, her exertions redoubled. While they both were able to take their full part, the income of the pair was comparatively ample, but as he was obliged to relinquish part after part of his accustomed performance, she redoubled her exertions, and took every trifling part which was in kindness offered her by the management. I acted with her in innumerable parts of light comedy as lover and sweetheart, as brother and sister, as betrayer and victim, and, in turn, as jilted and deceived. I have never been able to this day to decide whether I was really in love with her or not, but I rather think my feelings were those of a devoted and affection-

ate brother, and I am certain of this, that no man ever reverenced a woman more than I did this girl. At last the old man's paralysis became so confirmed that he could scarcely stand, he had to be carried to the side scenes and went through hours of agony when his short part was over.

One afternoon, about this time, after rehearsal, at which neither father nor daughter had been present, and whose fines for non-attendance I paid, a proceeding which, as I was known to be so intimate, passed as a mere matter of arrangement between ourselves, I went at the request of the manager to inquire whether either would be present at the evening performance.

Herr Apel had been obliged to leave his former lodgings owing to the reduction of his earnings, and I had not far to go to the dreary, shabby street near the theatre, where he occupied two rooms on the first floor. Liese received me in one of the lower rooms, and I noticed a strange expression in her face which I had never seen before.

"We could not come to the rehearsal," she said; "we have been rubbing him all day, and he has been in such pain! I do not think that even he can possibly play to-night. We have our fines ready."

"There is no question of fines," I said, "with you. You do not think so badly of Herr Wilhelmj as that, I hope."

She looked at me curiously, but made no remark. After a pause, she said—

"I sometimes think that nursing him and seeing him suffer affects me too. I feel at times a strange numbness and pain stealing over me. What would become of us if I became like him!"

"You must not think of such things," I said; "you have plenty of friends who will help you in every way. Let us go up to him."

We went together up stairs into a little room where the old clown lay. He had the expression of an idiot, and

seemed absolutely crippled and helpless; but I was not surprised at this, for I had seen him even worse before, and known him act the same evening with much of his old genius and fire. It was a most extraordinary fact that this man, helpless and idiotic to the last inch of the side scenes, regained, the moment the foot-lights flashed in his face and he saw the crowded theatre before him, all his strength, recollection, and humour, and went through his part apparently without an effort, only to collapse the moment he tottered behind the scenes.

He was whining and moaning as I sat down beside him on the sofa.

"No one pays any attention, no one takes any care of me," he said; "I am a poor old man. I have entertained people in my day—thousands and thousands; no one does anything for me. My daughter, even, does nothing; she might do much, but she does nothing; she is only thinking of herself and her own gains."

She stood leaning on the end of the couch, looking me full in the face with a sad, but not unhappy, look in her eyes. I could return her glance freely. The old man's state was so evident, it did not embarrass any one whatever he said. She leaned over her father.

"Shall you play to-night, papa?" she said: we used many French words in the theatre.

A contortion of pain passed over the old man.

It was a curious thing, but as I half rose, involuntarily, to help, I saw the same spasm of pain pass over the daughter's form, and she seemed bent down for a moment by it; then she stood upright, and looked at me with a wistful, earnest, inquiring gaze.

It is just possible—at this hour I do not think that I should—but still it is just possible that I might have asked what she had in her thoughts, when the door opened, and a female servant announced—

"The Count von Roseneau."

I rose in my seat as a very hand-

some young man, of some two-and-twenty years of age, came into the room. He was well known to us all as a constant frequenter of the green room, as you call it in England. He spoke kindly to the old man, who seemed to brighten at his presence, nodded to me, but took little notice of Liese. I know not what prompted me, but I stood for a moment silent, comparing myself with him. He was handsome, though of a more boyish style of beauty than mine; he was noble, though said not to be rich. He was far from clever, and of very moderate education. I was handsomer than he, trained in every art that makes the possessor attractive—eloquence, gesture, demeanour; my mind stored by the intelligent familiarity with the highest efforts of human genius; yet it never occurred to me to put myself for a moment into competition with him. After a few ordinary phrases, I took my leave.

From this day it seemed to me that Liese was more distant and reserved with me; she seemed, too, to act with indifference and even carelessly, and to be often *distracte* and forgetful. Her father grew worse and worse. He crept through his part, the mere shadow of his former self. At last the manager informed his daughter that it was impossible to allow him to appear any longer upon the stage.

"We will give him a benefit," he said, "in a week or two, at which all the strength of the theatre will assist. He shall be brought on in a chair, and shall sing his popular song. That must be the *finale*."

In about a month's time the benefit took place. The theatre was crowded, everything being done to make the entertainment attractive. Several actors came from distant cities to take part in the performance, for the old clown was one of the best-known men in the profession, and was associated with pleasant recollections in the memory of most players. Two favourite pieces were given with great

applause, and in the interval Herr Apel was brought in in a chair, which was placed in front of the foot-lights, and sang his song.

To the last moment, and even as he was carried across the stage, he seemed almost insensible of what was passing, but once in front of the lights, and of the great theatre rising tier over tier before him, every one upon his feet, with waving of handkerchiefs and fans, and a tumult of applause and of encouraging cries, he raised himself in the chair, his face assumed the old inimitable comic expression, and amid the delighted excitement of the vast crowd, he gave his song with as much power and wit as he had ever done in the course of his long career. Nor was this all, for the song being over, and the last two verses given twice, in response to the repeated encore, the long applause having a little subsided, the old man rose, and, without help, tottered forwards towards the lights, and amid the breathless silence of the house, and with a simple dignity which contrasted touchingly with his feebleness and his grotesque dress, spoke a few words of natural regret, of farewell, and of gratitude for the favours of a lifetime. He even, in the concluding sentence, turned slightly to the stage, which was crowded, and included his fellow-actors in the expression of kindly reminiscence and thanks. The excitement was intense. Men wept like children, not only in the theatre but on the stage; many women fainted, and it was some time before the curtain could rise again for the second piece. Herr Apel was taken home in a comatose state, and scarcely moved or spoke again during the remainder of his life.

Two days after this performance, as I was leaving the theatre after the morning rehearsal, I was accosted by a tall chasseur, who reminded me instantly of my old friend, St. Christopher, in the ducal court.

"Sir," he said, with great deference, "the Baroness Helena von Saarfeld

wishes to speak with you in her carriage, which is close by."

I followed the man to a handsome carriage which was standing a few doors from the stage entrance, a little way down the street. There, as I stood bareheaded at the open door, I saw, for the first time, the most beautiful woman, without exception, that I have ever seen.

Helena von Saarfeld was the only child of the late Baron, who was enormously wealthy and possessed of vast ancestral estates. He was a man of great intellect, and of superior attainments, and he undertook the entire education of his only child and heiress. Helena was taught everything that a man would know, and her father discussed all social and religious questions with her. He held very singular opinions upon social problems, and in religion he was much attached to the mystical doctrines of the Count von Zinzendorff. At a very early period he had contracted his daughter in marriage to the young Count von Roseneau, to whose father he had been much attached; but as the boy grew up, having been deprived early, by death, of his father's care, the baron became dissatisfied with the young man, and it was well known that at his death, which had taken place about two years before I saw his daughter, he had left a codicil to his will entirely exonerating her from any obligation to the young Count, and leaving her future destiny in her own hands, expressing every confidence in her judgment and discretion. All these facts were known to me as I approached the carriage.

The Baroness was at this time between two and three-and-twenty, in the full possession of her youth. She was of a perfect height, with brown hair, lighter than her eyes, and beautifully cut features; her mouth was perhaps rather large, but this only increased the wonderful effect of her smile, which was the most bewitching ever seen. She spoke with animation, and her smile was

so constant that the most wonderful thing about it was that its charm never flagged. This was the woman who was presented to my gaze as I stood in the sunshine bare-headed by the carriage door.

"I have wished to speak to you, Herr Richter," she said, throwing a world of fascination into her face and manner as she spoke; "will you oblige me by driving a short distance with me in the carriage? I will not take you far out of town."

I entered the carriage, and the coachman having orders to drive slowly, we passed through the crowded streets.

"I was at the theatre the other night," the Baroness said, "and I was extremely touched, as, indeed, we all were, at the sight of that poor old man; though I do not know that I should call him poor who all through his life has contributed to the gaiety and innocent enjoyment of the world, and could at his last breath speak words so touching and so noble as he did. May I ask of you, Herr Richter, what will become of him—I am so ignorant of these things—and whether it were possible for one like I am to help him in any way?"

"I shall be very glad, Madame la Baroness," I said, "to undertake to apply any help you may be most kindly disposed to afford. I am very intimate with Herr Apel, and can easily find ways of doing so; and I fear from what I know of his circumstances that any aid will be most welcome."

"That was what I feared," she said; "and it seems to me so sad that such should be the end of a life of toil like his!"

I saw at once that the Baroness was saying these last words by way of introduction to something else, and I did not reply. Probably she noticed this, for she said without the slightest hesitation—

"He has a daughter, I believe."

"He has," I replied.

"She is a very clever actress, I am told."

"She is a very conscientious, hard-working *artiste*," I replied, "and has, for a German, remarkable grace, and she sings charmingly."

"And she is a very good girl!"

"She is one of the best girls I ever knew. She is devoted to her father, and, I fear, is injuring herself by her exertions to make up the deficiency which is involved in his failing health. She is a thoroughly true and excellent girl."

The Baroness looked at me for a moment before she replied; then she said—

"You speak, Herr Richter, as I was given to expect. Fräulein Apel is fortunate in having so true a friend."

There was a pause. I knew something was coming, but I did not know what. Then she said, still without the slightest hesitation—

"The life of an actress is a difficult and exposed one, Herr Richter?"

"It is, Madame la Baronesse; but like all other ideas, this one has been exaggerated. A girl in this, as in other walks, has ample means of protection, and I have never heard that Fräulein Apel has even needed such."

She looked at me again for a moment. I began to think that she was the most lovely creature that ever walked the earth.

"But gentlemen and nobles court their acquaintance a good deal, do they not? This must be a great temptation in their sphere of life."

"Some gentlemen frequent the green-room," I replied, "and are fond of talking to the actresses. In some theatres it is forbidden."

"Has Fräulein Apel any friends of this kind?" said the Baroness; and now for the first time I detected a slight hesitation in her manner; but it was so trifling that no one but an actor would, I think, have perceived it. "The Count von Roseneau, for instance."

"The Count is a frequenter of the theatre," I said, "and I have seen him

speaking to Liese—to Fräulein Apel—in fact, I have met him at her house."

The Baroness was looking straight before her, now. She said without hesitation, but still seriously—

"I fear that any acquaintance between them will not be for good."

There was a pause. I scarcely knew what to say. It was the Baroness who broke it.

"I will not take you farther out of your way," she said. "I do not ask you to understand me, or not to misinterpret anything that I have said, for it is notorious that Herr Richter can do nothing but what the noblest gentleman might think. I hope I may see you again."

It is impossible to describe the superb courtesy with which she said this. The carriage was stopped, and I alighted, and made my adieux.

As I walked back into the city, pondering over this strange interview, I made up my mind decisively that, in spite of any obstacle and misunderstanding, the Baroness was deeply attached to the Count von Roseneau. You will have an opportunity of judging for yourself whether this was the fact or not, but I ask you to remember that this was the impression upon my mind, because it probably influenced my after conduct in an important crisis.

After this, matters went on for some time much as usual. The Baroness sent me several sums of money which I tried to appropriate to the wants of Herr Apel, and his daughter, but I found more difficulty in doing this than I expected. Liese showed a shyness and reserve towards me which I had never seen before. Once or twice I thought I noticed the same wistful glance that I had noticed before, but there was no reason why I should inquire into her thoughts, and I did not do so. I adopted the simple plan of placing the money in comparatively small sums in the old man's hand, and I have reason to know that he immediately gave them to his daughter.

Matters went on in this way for some time.

At last one evening there was a second piece at the theatre which somewhat resembled the first part of your pantomimes. There was a kind of love story running through it, but broken in upon by every kind of absurdity. We had played *Hamlet* for the first piece, considerably cut down, in which I took the part of Horatio. The actor who played Hamlet said courteously to me amid the applause that closed the play—

"Half of this, Richter, belongs to you," and insisted on taking me by the arm as he went before the curtain.

I played the lover in the second piece. I had noticed during the evening that the manner of Liese was unusually excited; she spoke much, and to every one; she was unusually friendly with me, and when the piece came on she took every opportunity of clinging to me, and playing her part in the most lively and charming way. I never saw her look more attractive. Towards the end of the piece when the climax of absurdity was nearly reached, there was a scene in which the King, the Lord Chancellor in his robes, and the two lovers meet in conclave to consult partly over state affairs, and partly over the fate of the two latter. Towards the end of the consultation, apparently as a relief to more serious business, it occurs to the Chancellor to sing a song and dance a hornpipe. After performing his part to admiration, and careering round the stage several times, he disappeared through the side scenes, and the King, inspired apparently by his example, waved his ball and sceptre, advanced to the footlights, and, singing his song, also danced round the stage, his robes greatly encumbering him, and, finishing up with a pirouette, which under the circumstances was highly creditable, also vanished from the scene. It then came to my turn, and leaving the side of Liese, by whom I had stood hitherto, I also sang two verses of a popular melody, and finished by a

dance; as I came back, amid applause, Liese regarded me with a glance full of kindness and congratulation, and glided forward to the footlights with the most graceful motion, to sing her song. I did not leave the stage, but stood watching her. She wore the dress of a Swiss country girl, and I some picturesque lover's costume. I noticed an unusual stillness in the crowded theatre, and fancied something uncommon in the rich tones of her voice. She was encored, and repeated the last verse; then she commenced her dance, coming round the stage three times. Each time that she passed me she made a graceful motion of her hand, to which I replied by kissing the tips of my fingers in an attitude of extreme devotion which indeed was little exaggeration of what I really felt. After the third time she came forward to the footlights, and made her pirouette higher than usual, amid a thunder of applause. Then she fell, flat and motionless upon the boards.

I had her in my arms in a moment. There was a rush of actors upon the stage, and the curtain fell with a crashing sound. We could hear the excitement and confusion amid the audience without. The manager went before the curtain in response to repeated calls, and said that an unfortunate accident had happened to Mademoiselle Liese. Except as far as she was concerned the piece would go on. He begged the forbearance of the audience for a few minutes.

Meanwhile I had carried Liese to a couch. She was quite conscious and spoke, but she could not move a limb. She never moved again.

Amid the crowd around her, some one at last forced his way. I turned and recognised Von Roseneau.

"Richter," he said, "my carriage is close at hand; we will take her home."

His manner was so wild and excited that I turned and looked at him. He was not in his evening dress, but appeared dressed for a journey.

"You do not generally have your carriage here, Count," I said.

"No," he replied, distractedly; "but for this accursed accident, she would have been mine to-night."

I looked at him for a moment.

"The paralysis is, then, only half to blame, Count Von Roseneau," I said.

* * * -*

We saw no more of the Count, and learnt that he had left the city. It appeared that he was deeply in debt, and, though he evidently had considerable sums of money at his control, that his person was not safe from arrest. The family estates had been heavily encumbered even in his father's time, though had he lived he would probably have succeeded in freeing them from debt. The Count had deposited a sum of money with an agent to be applied to the support of Herr Apel. Some days afterwards the agent called upon me and informed me that this sum was still at our disposal. I declined to receive it.

It seemed that uncertain of my feelings towards her, haunted by a terrible dread of approaching paralysis, and overwhelmed with the charge and burden of her father's state, Liese had yielded to the proposals of the Count, which promised ease and luxury to them all. If I could have made up my mind sooner, had I spoken to her more openly and freely, and endeavoured to win her confidence, it might have been different. Poor Liese!

"I will tell you what we must do, Liese," I said, as cheerfully as I could, two days after the accident, as I was sitting by her bed. She had recovered so far as to be able to move one arm a little. "I will tell you what we must do. You must marry me. We will then live all together and take care of the old man as long as he lives. Then when you have rested a long time and got quite well, we shall be as happy as the day is long."

And so—I am telling a long story—we settled it. The Baroness came to see Liese several times. We were

married in her room by a priest—most of us actors profess to be Catholics—and the Baroness was present at the ceremony. We moved to an old house in a better part of the town, where we had a large room with a long low window at either end commanding cheerful views, the one into a market-place, the other over the distant country with mills and a stream. Here Liese lay in a clean, white bed, with the old man seated beside her; he became much quieter and gentler after he had given up acting; and in the same room we had our meals, and lived. We were rather straitened for money, for now that I was bound to the city and theatre by my wife's state, some little advantage was taken, and I was told the theatre could not afford so high a salary. It is the way of the world. Indeed we should have been very poorly off, more than once, but for the Baroness, who sent me money openly from time to time. I took it without hesitation. One day she came to see us when I was at home, and remarked how comfortable we were in our large room, and the cheerful picturesque view at the back, like a landscape by an old master, and how happy the old man seemed. When she went down to her carriage, and I was handing her in, she said, looking straight before her, and with a kind of strange scorn in her voice,

"There is some difference, Herr Richter, between a noble of the empire and you!"

We went on in this way for more than a year. I was content enough; indeed, I should have been a wretch to have been impatient, for I knew it could not last very long. The doctors went on giving us hopes and expectations, but I knew better. I could see that the malady was gradually stealing over Liese's faculties and consuming her life. She had lost the use of both arms, and would lie for hours without the least sign of life, and she took nothing but a little broth. The old man died first: he went away very peacefully in his

chair in the evening sunlight, saying that it was time to dress. Some two months after his death, I was sitting by Liese in the afternoon, learning my part. It was autumn, and the room was full of a soft light; opposite to the bed was an old clock, upon the dial of which was an accidental mark. I had noticed that if I left when the minute hand reached this mark, I could reach the theatre easily without hurry. I sat watching the hand slowly approaching the spot. The room was perfectly still, nothing but the loud ticking of the clock being heard. The hand was within three minutes of the mark when Liese, who had lain motionless and unconscious for hours, suddenly stirred. I turned towards her in surprise; she looked up full in my face and smiled, and at the same moment she raised her right arm which had never moved since the fatal night, and held out her hand to me. I grasped it in mine, and the next moment she was gone.

* * * *

I acted that night as usual, for the public must not be disappointed. But I took a holiday soon after, and went a tour through the mountains. Not that I wish you to suppose that I was overwhelmed with grief; on the contrary, now that I have no temptation that way, I am ashamed to remember that I felt a sense of relief. Were the temptation to occur again, no doubt I should feel the same.

When I returned from my little tour I found myself courted. Now that I was free to go where I liked the management suddenly found that I was very useful, and offered me a considerable increase of salary to remain. Indeed, I was so flattered and courted that I became somewhat vain and light-headed. I dressed finely, and went much into society, for I was invited to some of the best houses in the city as an agreeable and entertaining guest. I saw the Baroness frequently, and was always invited to her garden-parties, which she received at a small but beautiful château, a

mile or two from the city, by the stream which flowed before poor Liese's room. Indeed, I was quite at home at the château, and the servants treated me almost as an inmate.

At the conclusion of one of these parties, about two years after Liese's death, the Baroness took an opportunity, as she passed, to say to me—

"I am going to-morrow to spend a few days at Saarfeld, which I think you have never seen. It is a strange, old, romantic place among the Bavarian Alps, and I think would please you. I wish you would arrange to come over and stay a night or two. I shall be quite alone, as I go on business of the estate."

I promised to go.

As the travelling chaise wound up from the valleys by long and gradual ascents, and the beauties of the mountain forests revealed themselves one by one, I seemed to be entering an enchanted land of romance and witchery. Light mists hovered below the lofty summits, and over the thick foliage of the oaks and beech-trees. They were illumined with prismatic colours by the slanting sunbeams which shot in strange and mystic rays through mountain crag and forest glade, throwing up portions in wild relief and depressing others into distant shade. The huts of hunters and woodmen, and the wreaths of smoke from the charcoal burners, were the only signs of life in this wild land of forest and hill. The lofty woods of black pine climbing the higher summits shut in the view on every side.

At last I reached the château, which stood high up in the forest, commanding an extensive and surprising view.

It was indeed a strange, wild old place of immense size, with long rows of turrets and windows, and massive towers of vast antiquity. We entered a court-yard, surrounded by lofty walls, so completely covered with ivy that the windows could scarcely be seen. It seemed as though the real and living world were entirely

shut out and lost sight of. The whole place, however, was in perfect repair, and was richly furnished. The staff of servants was ample. The majordomo, who always accompanied his mistress, welcomed me with great kindness. The Baroness, he said, was at that moment engaged with the steward; if I would take some slight refreshment after my journey, she would receive me presently in the grand salon. I was shown into a dining-room, where a slight repast was awaiting me. The rooms were hung with portraits of the old barons of Saarfeld, with tapestry of strange device, and with still stranger pictures of the old German and Italian masters, and were furnished with cabinets and sideboards, evidently of extreme antiquity. The sense of glamour and of mystery increased upon me at every step; I seemed to be acting in a wild and improbable piece.

When I had taken what refreshment I wanted, I asked to be shown my room that I might arrange my dress before seeking the Baroness. I had scarcely finished before the majordomo again appeared, and informed me that his mistress was waiting for me in the grand salon. I found this to be a magnificent apartment, with a long row of lofty windows in deep recesses overlooking the wild forest. Tall portraits of more than life-size hung upon the walls, and a massive stone chimney-piece, the height of the room, and carved with innumerable devices, fronted the windows. The polished oak floor would have been dangerous to walk on, but an actor is always equal to such feats.

The Baroness was standing in the centre of the vast room which was clear of furniture. I seemed to see her at last in her full perfection, as though such a lovely creature required such a setting as this before she could be fully and perfectly seen. She was easy and composed, and began to speak at once.

"I wish to tell you at once, my dear friend," she said, "why I have asked

you to come here, because it is only fair to you that you should know it at once."

She paused for a moment, and I could only look at her in silent admiration. I had not the remotest idea what she was going to say, but it seemed to me more and more that I was acting a strange and unnatural part.

"You are aware, my dear friend," she repeated, "that my father had some thought of marrying me, had he lived, to the Count von Roseneau, but long before his death he saw in that unhappy young man what made him change his intention. He spoke to me often with great freedom on this as on every other subject; it was the wonderful privilege which I enjoyed with such a father. He spoke to me much of the relationship between man and wife, of the peculiar duties and trials of each, and of the necessity of long and careful thought and of seeking for the best guidance in such a matter. He impressed upon me the value of eternal principles rather than of accidental forms; and though he insisted continually on the necessary observance of outward forms and decencies, yet he pointed out to me that circumstances might arise where all the necessary principles and qualities which alone give forms any value could exist, though some of the form itself might appear wanting. Finally, in the most solemn manner he assured me, and confirmed it in his will, that he was perfectly satisfied to leave the matter in my hands, convinced that I should follow out the great principles upon which his life had been based, and show myself worthy of the confidence and education he had bestowed upon me. I believe that I am about to act in a manner that would meet his full approval. I believe that those circumstances have actually arrived which he foresaw, and that I have found the man whom he would welcome as a son. I offer you my hand."

She pronounced these words, even to

the last, without any hurry of manner or the slightest sign of excitement beyond the charming animation with which she always spoke. You will naturally suppose that their effect upon me was overwhelming, but if so you are mistaken. It has been a matter of profound astonishment to me, in every succeeding moment of my life, that I acted as I did. Afterwards, of course, no end of reasons appeared which justified, and even approved in the highest degree, my conduct; but that, at the instant, when in another moment I might have had this glorious creature in my arms, I should have remained unmoved, has never ceased to fill me with astonishment. I can only account for it by one wild and seemingly improbable supposition. You will not believe it, but I am firmly convinced that during the whole interview I thought that I was on the stage, I thought that I had a part given me, and that I spoke words which I had already carefully conned. I am the more convinced that this was the case because I made no longer pause than would have been proper could you conceive such a scene to be enacted upon the stage.

"Baroness," I said, and I see the words now before me as plainly as if I read them from a play-book, "Baroness, it cannot be necessary to say that the offer you have made overwhelms me to the earth. I do not use such phrases as gratitude, and favour, and condescension; words at any time are unequal to the task of expression, and to use them now would only be an insult to your heart and mine. But I should be utterly unworthy of the amazing regard which you have shown to me, and of the undeserved approbation with which your own goodness has led you to regard me, were I to hesitate for a moment to urge you to reflect before you commit yourself to such a step. You have yourself allowed that your father insisted on the necessity of submission to the forms and decencies of outward life. Think for

a moment of the consequences to yourself of such a step as you now, with the sublime unconsciousness of the highest natures, propose to me. You have created out of your own nobleness an image which you call by my name, but you will find the reality an idol and a delusion, and you will find the world's verdict, on the whole, to be right. I entreat you to pause."

"Herr Richter," she said, looking me full in the face, and no language can express the beauty of her confiding glance, "every word you say only confirms my choice. I offer you my hand."

This second trial was very hard.

"My conscience is not at rest," I said. "I entreat you to reflect."

A very slight shade passed over the beautiful face, and a look of something like incredulity came into the wonderful eyes.

"You refuse my offer?" she said.

"I entreat you to weigh well what I have said."

"I might well say, Herr Richter," she said, "that there is some difference between you and other men."

There was a pause. The interview became embarrassing. I turned slightly towards the window, and it occurred to me to walk into the embrasure and look out. When I turned round, after a minute or two, I found that the Baroness had taken advantage of my action and had left the room.

I went out into the park. The moment I was alone a host of reasons rushed into my mind, all of them insisting with one voice on the propriety of the course I had, as it were involuntarily, taken. I was firmly convinced that whether she knew it or not the Baroness was attached with all the tenacity of her girlhood's recollections to the Count von Roseneau. Supposing this to be the case I could well see that the position, when novelty had played its part, of the player-husband would not be a dignified or enviable one. I knew, none better, the effect of the overpowering sympathies of rank and class, and of

the revulsion which inevitably follows action which is the result of excited feeling. I knew the ultimate irresistible power of the world's verdict. Of course some demon might have suggested that I should take the temporary wealth of delight which was offered to me, and, when the inevitable catastrophe came, go my quiet way unharmed, but I should hope that there are few men who would desire a temporary pleasure at so stupendous a cost.

I wandered in the park and forest for a couple of hours. Then I came back to the château. I was uncertain what to do, but I did not like to leave without seeing the Baroness again. I went to my room. Here I found one of the valets arranging my toilette for the evening. I had not been in the room many minutes before the major-domo entered. His manner was even more urbane and polite than in the morning.

The Baroness, he said, earnestly hoped that I would favour her with my company at dinner; the meal would be served in less than an hour.

The man's manner was so marked that I could not help looking at him. Was it possible that the household could have any idea of what had taken place?

I found the Baroness in an antechamber which opened upon one of the lesser dining rooms. There were several servants standing about between the two rooms, but she seemed utterly indifferent to their presence. Her manner was perfectly unembarrassed, and she came forward to greet me, holding out her beautiful hand.

"My dear friend," she said, "I feared you had left Saarfeld in displeasure. I hope you will not deprive me of what I value so highly. I have quite recovered from the little natural vexation I felt at your refusal of my offer. I will not offend again. Let us go to dinner."

"On one condition, Baroness," I said, as I gave her my arm, "that

you are not too fascinating. I might take you at your word."

"Your chance is gone by, sir," she said, with a delightful *moue*. "The ivory gates are closed."

I still felt as though I were performing in a play. I never exerted myself to please as I did that night. When the evening was over, I said, "I fear I shall not see you in the morning. I must be at the theatre to-morrow night."

"I shall not stay here many days," said the Baroness. "You must call on me the moment I return, my friend."

I raised the hand she gave me, and kissed the tips of her fingers, but I did not press her hand. When a man is walking in slippery places he is wary of his steps.

* * * * *
I visited the Baroness immediately on her return, and found her as friendly and unembarrassed as ever. The months glided by with great quietude. The theatre was under good management; it was prosperous, and the best actors frequently visited it. It was one of those halcyon periods which visit all theatres at times. My popularity increased, and I could have demanded almost any salary. I was invited to other cities, but these visits I made very sparingly. What, however, might perhaps have been expected occurred, and caused me great annoyance. A report spread through the city that I was about to be married to the Baroness. It was universally believed.

"Have you heard the news?" men said, one to another. "The beautiful Helena von Saarfeld, for whom princes were not high enough, or cultured, or religious enough, who was almost too good to walk the earth, is going to marry Richter the player! What do you think of that?"

"Have you heard the news, Herr Richter?" said the Baroness, one afternoon as I entered her drawing-room.

"Yes," I said. "It has annoyed

me beyond expression. Who could have originated such a report?"

"Oh," she said, with a bewitching under-glance of her eyes, "such things cannot be hidden. It is not my fault that it is not true."

"That is all very well, my pretty friend," I thought to myself, "while the Count is away and out of mind, but what will happen should he return?"

I was congratulated on all hands, and could only deny that there was a word of truth in the report.

"It is most annoying to me," I said. "I shall have to give up visiting the Baroness." My friend would not hear of this, however, and seemed to take every opportunity of appearing with me in public. This had very much the desired effect, for when people saw we had nothing to conceal, they grew wearied of talking about us, and the matter pretty much dropped.

One evening as I was dressing in the theatre, I received a note from the Baroness, asking me to come to her château the next day at one o'clock, without fail. I was true to the time, and found her in a little morning-room where she transacted business. She seemed excited beyond her wont.

"My dear friend," she said, "I have sent for you because I want your advice and protection. I have good reason to know that I am safer in your care than I am in my own. There was a man here yesterday, a kind of Jew lawyer, who made an excuse to see me, though his business might well have been settled with the agent. When he had said what he had to say, however, he became very mysterious, and said that he had lately seen the Count von Roseneau, and that he had something to communicate which it very much concerned me to hear. His face wore a low, cunning expression as he said this, which disgusted me, and I told him that I had nothing to say on such subjects to him, and that if he had anything to communicate it must come through my agent. He told me he could tell it to no one

but myself. I thought immediately of you; and told him that if he liked to call here to-morrow at this time I would ask a gentleman, a very intimate friend, to be present, and then he could say what he wished. He hesitated at this, but I turned my back upon him, and left the room."

"Do you know any evil of the man?" I asked.

"I know nothing of such people," she said, scornfully. "I know no more evil of him than I do of a toad, but I shudder at both."

The man was speedily announced. He was evidently of the lowest type of his profession, and had a mean and hang-dog look. I do not know whether he knew me or not, but he took little notice of any but the Baroness.

He began his tale at once.

He had lived in Berlin where the Count von Roseneau was, and had been engaged in some inferior business connected with the mortgage on the Count's estates.

"The Count's affairs," he said, "were getting more and more involved; he was deeply in debt, was very short of money, and indeed had been more than once under arrest. The mortgages were foreclosed on all his estates, and the estates themselves offered for sale, when one day going over some deeds in the office of the lawyer who was engaged in managing what little remained to do on his behalf, I discovered a most important memorandum, signed by the Count himself. It is not necessary to explain before the Baroness," he continued, turning to me, "the exact nature of the complicated business, but you will understand that the paper had been given in lieu of deeds which never seem afterwards to have been executed, and was the sole evidence which decided the possession of the estates, or, at least, of the most considerable one. It had been inclosed by mistake in a parcel of copies that had been returned to the Count. I found him alone, and placed the paper in his hands. It was some time before

he understood its character, but when at last he was convinced that its possession restored him to wealth and honour, a singular expression came into his face.

"'This is a nice homily, my good fellow,' he said, 'on you men of business, with all your chicanery of deeds, and evidences, and papers, and signing, and counter-signing, and all the rest of the devil's game. What do you want for this paper? You did not bring it for nothing, I presume.'

"'Well,' I said, 'a thousand marks would not seem too much for such a service.'

"'A thousand marks,' said the Count, rising, 'is all I have in the world; nevertheless I will give it for this paper.'

"'I should think so,' I said. 'A thousand marks are not much for estates and wealth.'

"The Count went to his secretaire, looked out a roulette of gold, and handed it to me. Then he sat down again, and looked at the paper, steadily, for some time.

"'Neat,' he said to himself more than to me: 'pretty, very pretty, but not my style; never was the Von Roseneau style, that I ever heard.'

"Then he bowed me politely out of the room. What happened, I heard from his valet. As soon as I had left, the Count sat down at the secretaire, wrote some lines in an envelope, fastened up the paper in it, directed it, and called the servant.

"'You will take this to the address,' he said, 'and give it to the principal. If he is out, wait for him, though it be all day. You will give it into no hands but his. Tell me when it is done.'

"The Count is now," continued the Jew, "in absolute penury. He has applied for a commission in the Bavarian Infantry, which he is certain to receive. The miserable pay will be all he will have to live on. He has business in this city which requires his presence. I expect him here, for a few hours, in a day or two."

No. 274.—VOL. XLVI.

The Baroness rose from her chair, and I could see that she was pale.

"You will settle with this—this gentleman," she said to me, and left the room.

"Well," I said to the man. "You want something for the communication, I suppose?"

I saw that he did not know who I was, for his manner was deferential, as to a gentleman of rank.

He said he left it to the Baroness.

I gave him a heap of notes, as I knew it would be the Baroness's wish, and he left well satisfied.

I went into the drawing-room to the Baroness.

She was standing in the window, looking at the gorgeous flowers that were heaped together in profusion—a soft and pensive light in her eyes. She was evidently thinking of the Count, and of their early days.

Her attitude and expression were so lovely that I stopped involuntarily to gaze. She looked up, and saw, I suppose, something in my look which she had not seen before, for she flushed all over, and said, with a softened, pleased expression which was bewitching to see—

"You are a strange man, Richter; I know you love me."

"Yes, I love you, Baroness," I said, "better than I love myself."

"That is nothing," she said, flushing again. "Do you think I did not know that? Do you think I should have acted as I have done had I not doubted whether in all Germany, nay, in Europe itself, there could be found a man so good as you!"

"Let us hope, Baroness, for the sake of Europe, there may be a few."

"Well," she said, sitting down, "I want you to do something for me. A very little thing this time. I want you to find out when the Count comes, to go to him, and to get him to come over to Saarfeld to me."

"What are you going to say to him?" I said.

She looked up suddenly, as in anger,

but the next instant a touching look of humility came over her face, and she said—

"I am going to make him the same offer that I did to you, sir!"

I shook my head. "Do you know so little of your own people—of your own order—as that," I said. "He will refuse."

"I am not only a noble," she said, almost pitifully, "I am a woman too."

There was a pause. Then she said, "Why do you say that he will refuse?"

"He has the distinguishing vice of his order," I said, "insolent, selfish pride. It is notorious that he took great umbrage at what he considered interference in his affairs by your father and yourself, and at the blame which the breaking off of the match implied. He will think that you make him the offer now out of pity. His pride of race will rebel, and he will refuse a future, however splendid, marked by favours received and restrained by gratitude, and, he may even think, by compulsion. I have a better plan. I will seek him out; and if I find that he does not refuse to talk with me, and I do not see why he should, I will let him understand that you are kindly disposed towards him. I will recall his early days, and I will endeavour to make him believe that he is performing a chivalrous action, and forgiving injuries, and is conferring rather than receiving a favour. I hope to succeed. You said to me this morning that you were safer in my keeping than in your own. Trust to me now, though God knows I only do it to please you; I am not responsible for the result."

"No," said the Baroness, getting up from her seat. "I am a woman, and I will go my own way. I will have him at Saarfeld, where we were so happy as children. I will tell him all myself."

"She trusts to her charms," I said as I left the house. "It cannot be wondered at. Come what may, I will not marry her. The world shall never

say that this divine creature married Richter the player."

* * * * *

Some few days afterwards I learnt that the Count had arrived. In the interval I had urged the Baroness to dispense with my advocacy altogether, and simply to send a message; but this she refused to do. I had nothing left but to do my best.

I called at the hotel at which the Count was staying, and sent in my name. I was immediately shown up to a private room.

"I see you are surprised to see me, Count von Roseneau," I said, "but I am not come to revive any reminiscences of the past. I simply bring you a message from the Baroness Helena, who asked me to tell you that she wished to see you at Saarfeld."

"If I showed any wonder, Herr Richter, said the Count, "it was simply that I was surprised that you should condescend to call upon me. As you have mentioned the Baroness, I am glad of the opportunity of saying that I am convinced that she can have no truer friend than yourself."

"The Baroness," I said, "is of the opinion that I might become the best means of telling you that she still cherishes the recollections of her early childhood. If I might venture to say anything, I would say that we do not war against women, and that though doubtless many things may have happened founded upon exaggerated reports, yet the Count von Roseneau will not cherish such paltry recollections in such a moment as this."

"The Baroness," said the Count, "has chosen well, though I fancy I can see that she has acted against the advice of her best friend. I will go to Saarfeld at any moment she may appoint, and anything that is within my power, and which is consistent with the honour of my family, I will do; the more willingly because by doing so I know I shall oblige you."

This was all very well, and I did not see what else I could say. There

was a polished coldness about the Count's manner which seemed to imply that the Baroness and he moved in a charmed circle within which it was intrusion for any one to venture. I had delivered my message, to the words of which the Baroness had almost limited me, and I rose to take my leave ; but I was not prepared for what ensued.

The Count followed me to the door. "Herr Richter," he said, speaking in a very different tone from that which he had hitherto used, "I wish to say something else. I wish, if I can possibly say it, to say something which will cause you to think less hardly of me with regard to one who is dead ; which will offer you some thanks, though thanks from such a source must be utterly worthless—for—but there are no words which can express what I mean—if you do not see it, there is no help."

I stood looking at him across the threshold for a moment.

"In the matter of which you speak, Count von Roseneau, if I understand you, and I think I do, I also was to blame. It is not for me to judge another. If you owe me thanks for anything that is past let me entreat you to weigh well every word you say at Saarfeld."

"I promise you," said the Count.

* * * *

With regard to the interview at Saarfeld, I only know what the Baroness told me. I believe that she told me every word that fell from the Count, but her own words and manner I had to collect as best I could. It was evident that she adopted a very different method from that which she had done toward myself. She received the Count indifferently, and put off the important moment as long as possible. No doubt she brought to play the whole fascination of her manner and person, but she selected the great salon as the scene of her final effort, In what way she introduced the subject I do not know, but she told me that she was standing in one of the

embrasures of the windows when the Count replied.

"Helena, I am unworthy of you, but I am grateful all the same. I cannot allow you to sacrifice yourself simply out of pity to me. I am a ruined man—ruined in purse and reputation. The auguries which influenced your opinion of me when we were younger, are fulfilled—more than fulfilled. What would the world say if, when the fear alone of possible consequences rendered your union with me unsuitable, I were to avail myself of such a union when all these dreary predictions have been verified ? Let the world say what it will, the Von Roseneaus are proud ; that which was denied me because I was unworthy I cannot accept because I am poor. Besides, I cannot forget one who is dead."

The Baroness was standing against the embrasure of the window which was lined with tapestry. She was evidently anxious to retain her perfect composure, but as the Count continued speaking with a manly openness of purpose, her calmness was sorely tried. The last words came to her help. She grew composed instantly, and her face darkened with displeasure.

"You should take lessons from the stage, Count," she said, somewhat bitterly. "The actor declines a supreme favour with better grace than you."

The Count said nothing ; he was probably not displeased at the loss of temper which would bring the interview to a close.

"Then you refuse my offer ?" she said at last.

"I cannot accept."

"Mine is a strange fate, Count von Roseneau," she said. "In this hall, beneath the portraits of my ancestors, I have, in violation of all the customs of my sex, offered my hand to two men, one an actor, and one a noble, and have been rejected by both."

"The actor, madam," said the Count, stepping back, "you may well

regret, the noble is not worth a thought."

* * * *

The Baroness did not bear her second disappointment so well as the first. She looked sad, though the smile lost nothing of its sweetness, nor her manner of its vivacity. She had a wistful look in her eyes sometimes when they met mine, which, it might be thought, must have made my resolution hard to keep. If you like you may call my determination a selfish fancy which my vanity alone enabled me to maintain. The Baroness spoke a great deal of the Count, and talked to me much of her early days and of the confusions and ill-feeling when the young Count's conduct first began to arouse the fears of her father.

"I get very old and prosy, my friend," she said—she grew lovelier every day—"and I fatigue you with this talk, but I have no friend but you to whom I can speak of these things." She devoted herself to charity and good works; she visited the hospitals, and her carriage was to be seen in the worst purlieus of the city.

One day she told me she had received an invitation to travel in Italy with some cousins of her mother's, the head of the party being a superb old gentleman whom I had often met, and who reminded me of Don Quixote. This old gentleman had at first been very cold and haughty, but after some time his manner changed suddenly, the cause of which alteration the Baroness explained to me.

"The old gentleman," she said, "took me to task very severely upon the danger of my intercourse with you, and gave himself much trouble in repeating at great length the most wise maxims. I let him run on till he was quite out of breath, and then I said: 'My dear cousin, all that you have said is quite true, and shows your deep knowledge of the world. There has been the greatest danger of what you dread taking place. I offered my hand to Herr Richter years ago, and

any time within the last five years, excepting one short week, I would have married him if he would have had me.' I saw that the old Baron was very polite the next time you met."

The Baroness wanted me to accompany her to Italy, and offered to settle a large sum of money on me absolutely, so that I might give up my profession.

"No, Baroness," I said, "let us go on as we have begun. We have had a fair friendship, for which I do not say how much I thank you, and which no breath of calumny has ever stained; do not let us spoil it at last."

So we parted, but only for a time.

When the party had left for Italy I felt less tied to the city and accepted engagements elsewhere. I acted in Berlin, and so far departed from my rule as to take one or two principal parts with more success than I had expected. This was chiefly owing to the fact that in Germany the new reading of any part is welcomed with enthusiasm, and a host of critics immediately discover numberless excellences in it, chiefly to show off their own cleverness. Many of these gentlemen were kind enough to point out many beauties in my acting of which I was entirely unconscious. This led to my receiving invitations to other cities, which I accepted. In the course of my wanderings I arrived at a city on the French frontier, where I accepted an engagement for several nights to play Max Piccolomini. In the midst of this engagement the war between Germany and France suddenly broke out, and before we were aware we found ourselves involved in the marches and counter-marches of armies. The theatre was closed, and the company dispersed. I attempted to return into Saxony, but the advancing armies so blocked the roads that I was compelled to turn back. The French were advancing with equal rapidity, and I found myself shut in between the opposing troops. The campaign was so complicated that what was the rear

one day became the advanced guard the next. The utmost confusion seemed to prevail.

At last I found myself in a little suburb of some large town devoted to Lusthauses and gardens of pleasure ; pretty little cottages appeared on every side surrounded by gardens and grass plats dotted with alcoves and sheltered by lofty trees. The French made a sudden advance, and held the adjoining slope, but did not come into the suburb. A small detachment of German Uhlans had halted in the village, and were watching the French.

I was standing in the door of one of the cottages with the officer of the little troop, when the chasseur of the Baroness, whom I knew so well, rode up. I sprang forward to meet him, and learnt that a skirmish had taken place outside the town, and that the wounded men were being brought from the front in charge of an ambulance corps to which the Baroness had attached herself.

A few minutes afterwards the corps arrived bringing with them several wounded men. I shall never forget the look of glad surprise in the face of the Baroness when she saw me. It is the most cherished recollection of my life.

" You come as always in the right time, my friend," she said. " In a few minutes we shall be in the thick of the battle. Whenever I want help and protection, you appear. How did you learn that I was here ? "

" I did not know you were in Germany, Baroness," I said. " It is the will of God that we should meet ; something is going to happen which concerns us both."

She wore the ambulance dress, with the white cross upon her arm, and looked more lovely than ever.

We had not stood above five minutes before we heard firing to the right and left ; and the Uhlans mounted and rode off, advising us to retire into the cottages with the wounded. It was too late, they said, for the ambu-

lance corps to retire further into the rear.

Having deposited the wounded as best we could, the Baroness and I went into an upper room which looked out to the side over a small grass plot flanked by a low wall and a plantation of willows. The firing came nearer and nearer, and all along the slope on our left we could see the French lines and the artillery officers riding up and down. We did not know what was going on.

Suddenly a roar like hell itself shook the earth from end to end ; the cannon balls came crashing through the branches of the trees, and a hail of lead swept off the leaves, tore up the grass in faint lines, and shook the wall of the cottage with their dull thud. We could see a strange commotion among the plantations on our right, and the next moment a form which we both knew too well vaulted over the low wall and came across the grass. A second after him other officers leaped the wall, and without waiting to see if their men followed, hurried across the lawn, and up the slope. They had no need to pause. The next moment the Bavarian infantry, the men falling at every step, cleared the fence, and in spite of the torrent of fire which seemed to burn the earth before it, crossed the garden, and ascended, in almost unbroken line the hill beyond, half concealed by the shattered trees. Other regiments followed, equally steady, and equally exposed to the never-ceasing storm, and in about eight minutes the firing lulled ; the French had fallen back.

We went out of the cottage. Never in the wildest stage effect could such a transformation be beheld as this village scene presented. Eight minutes ago, smiling in the sunshine, peaceful, bright with flowers, and green grass and trees—now shattered, mangled, trodden down, the houses in ruins and in flames, the trees broken and leafless, the ground strewn with the dying and the dead. The ambulance was

already at work, but the Baroness did not stop.

"Let us go to the front, my dear friend," she said.

I knew what she meant. The chasseur, who kept close to his mistress, followed us, and we went forward up the slope, picking our way among the fallen men, and now and then stopping while the Baroness gave some poor fellow a drink of water, and assured him that the ambulance corps would be up immediately. As we ascended the slope and looked back for a moment, we could see that the village and the whole line of country was occupied by the main body of the German troops—a magnificent sight.

At last, near the top of the slope we met two Bavarians who were carrying an officer between them. The Baroness knelt down, and, without hesitation, the men laid their burden before her, in her arms.

"We do not think he is dead, lady," said one of them, the tears

streaming down his face. "He moved once as we came along."

He lay perfectly still, to all appearance lifeless, his eyes closed.

"Speak to him," I said, "perchance he may hear you."

"Von Roseneau," cried the Baroness, in a tone I never wish to hear again, "Von Roseneau, will you marry me now?"

The despairing tremor of her voice seemed to recall the departed spirit already wandering in other lands. The dying man opened his eyes, a brilliant smile lighted his face, his gaze met that of the Baroness, and he held out his hand, but he could not speak. The next moment he fell back dead within her arms.

* * * *

"And what became of the Baroness?" I asked, for the actor paused.

"She became a canoness, and devoted herself entirely to the mystical religion of the Count von Zinzendorff."

J. HENRY SHORTHOUSE.

THE PRELUDE TO THE FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR. (1866-7.)

To explain and reconcile Prince Bismarck's complex, if not really contradictory, methods of statesmanship may be possible for our children, when more than one cabinet, now closed, shall have opened its secret correspondence to the light of day. We must be content with the partial, though very considerable and very interesting, information which we get from time to time from the diplomats of other nations who have tried to measure themselves with the German chancellor. And we see these makers of the history of our times repeating themselves, as history itself is said to do. We see how, more than once, the frank and well-meaning M. de Bismarck has found himself unable to keep his promises, owing to the opposition of his sovereign, or of the military party, or of the national parliament and press, or of the foreign powers; and how he has presently reappeared as the master, and his original confidants as the victims, of the circumstances over which he declared himself to have lost all control. Yet, not only new comers, but those who had already suffered from their misplaced trust, are still found "shooting madly from their spheres" to listen to the dulcet strains of this siren in the guise of a bluff Pomeranian squire. They continue unwarmed by an experience the voice of which might remind us of the friendly remonstrance of the showman who, when Lord Stowell was about to pay his shilling to see the Mermaid, said, "Don't go in, sir, it's only the old Say-sarpint." We in England smiled last autumn at the repeated statements that the Sultan expected Prince Bismarck to restore the Mohammedan supremacy in North Africa

in spite of what France could do; and that the Pope hoped that the same helping hand was to bring Rome back under the temporal sovereignty of the Vatican: but the recently published account of *L'Affaire du Luxembourg*, by M. Rothan, a French diplomatist of the Second Empire,¹ taken with the history of the events which preceded and followed that particular incident, shows the credulity of the Emperor Napoleon and his ministers as not less than any that can be attributed to Pope or Sultan, to the Emperor of Austria or the Czar of Russia.

We do not yet know all the secret history of the way in which Count Bismarck led the Austrians through the mazes of the Schleswig-Holstein policy and the dismemberment of Denmark, to the breaking up of the Austrian headship in Germany, and the substitution of that of Prussia. But the Italian minister, La Marmora, gave the world not "a little light"² on the methods by which the wily chancellor endeavoured to obtain the cat-saw services of Italy in 1866: how he tried to persuade the Italians to commit themselves to war with Austria while Prussia kept herself free, to advance money for a Hungarian insurrection, and to put their army entirely under the direction of Prussia, and then—if the Italians would only have faith enough—everything should come right at the proper moment; and how Italian diplomacy, not for the first time, was more than a match for that of Germany, even when the latter was directed by such a master-mind

¹ G. Rothan, *L'Affaire du Luxembourg*, &c., 8vo., Paris, C. Lévy, 1882.

² The title of his narrative of these negotiations is *Un po' più di Luce*.

as that of Count Bismarck. General La Marmora was no less clear-sighted and decided than he was high-minded and straight-forward. His envoy, General Govone, was right when, after reporting the results of his first interview with Count Bismarck, he added, in a postscript, that it might seem that there was nothing left but to break off the negotiations, but that if the Italian Minister instructed him to go on, the snake would end by biting the conjuror—“*la vipera avrà morsicato il ciarlatano.*” But there were other snakes who did not bite, but were mastered by, the charmer. M. Rothan tells us in great detail how the Emperor of the French was led and managed through, and after, the same period—1866 and 1867. He was induced to promise and to maintain his neutrality during the war of Prussia and Italy against Austria in 1866, partly by what he at least supposed to be assurances that the chancellor would not object to his getting the Palatinate, the fortress of Mainz, or even Belgium, in the eventual settlement which would follow the war; partly in the alternative belief that Austria and not Prussia would be the more likely to win, and that anyhow the contest would be so prolonged that he might meanwhile put off the day of decision and action, which was always so hateful to his hesitating temperament; and partly by the more generous hope that Italy—the object of his youthful dreams and conspiracies—would somehow get Venice and the northern fortresses, which he had failed of obtaining for her in 1859.

Having thus secured the neutrality of France, Prussia was able to concentrate upon Bohemia an army of which a large part must otherwise have been left to guard the Rhine: the seven weeks' war culminated in the battle of Sadowa: and Napoleon suddenly found himself obliged to take some course of action. The failure of the Mexican expedition had weakened his popularity with the army and the servile multitude; and it was essential

for him at least to soothe and reassure the more vulgar passion of the nation for its *prestige* among the great powers of Europe. Though too late to prevent the great blow which had destroyed the old German Confederation with its Austrian leadership, and so secured the future empire to Prussia, Napoleon was able to stay the Prussian army at the gates of Vienna, to save the King of Saxony his crown, and to make the Main the southern boundary of the new Confederation. For a moment the Emperor resolved to do more than this, and to interpose with an armed mediation. But he was warned by a prudent minister that this would inevitably involve him in war with Prussia and Italy at a moment when—so great had been the shortcomings of his incompetent and corrupt war administration—he could only put some forty thousand men in the field, and they not armed with the new needle-musket to which the French soldiers attributed (erroneously enough) the Prussian victories, rather than to the strategic and tactical capacity and skill of the generals and their troops. Yet something must be done before the meeting of the French Chambers, to appease the rising discontent. For the country viewed, and would view, as the prospect became plainer, the Prussian aggrandisement as a national humiliation.

A distinguished historian has observed that whereas the old doctrine of the Balance of Power meant that no small state should be allowed to be absorbed by a great neighbour, its modern and corrupt form is that when one Great Power resolves to annex a small neighbour, each of the other Great Powers shall be entitled to “compensation” by another acquisition of the like kind. And accordingly Napoleon, who had required Nice and Savoy as his compensation for the aggrandisement of Italy, now protested to Prussia that France must have some fresh compensation for the annexations of Hanover, Electoral Hesse, Nassau, and Frankfort. He

claimed the fulfilment of the understanding that he was to have the Palatinate and Mainz as a present compensation, while he hoped for Belgium and Luxemburg hereafter, when Prussia thought fit to cross the Main. Then followed a series of diplomatic moves and counter-moves in which the French emperor and his ambassador at Berlin, M. Benedetti, on the one side, and M. de Bismark on the other, played a game of which, and of its results, M. Rothan gives us the curious details. He tells us that his information is derived from the secret letters and telegrams which actually passed, or from the narrations given him by the ministers themselves. The despatches in the *Livre Jaune*, were, he says, composed after the events for popular use; as, he adds, were those produced in 1844 on the Spanish Marriages, when "M. Guizot, on the documents being called for, laid before the Chambers a correspondence appropriate to the circumstances." When the Prussian Government refused to cede the Palatinate and Mainz to France, notwithstanding the previous promises on that point, M. Benedetti was instructed to propose a treaty offensive and defensive, which was to consist partly of a secret convention to allow France to annex Belgium whenever she judged the fitting moment to have come, and in which she was to be aided, if necessary, by a Prussian army; and partly of an open cession of Luxemburg to France on payment of an indemnity to the King of Holland, its Grand Duke, with a declaration that the Prussian right of garrisoning the citadel of Luxemburg was extinguished by the fact of the dissolution of the Germanic Confederation, as well as required to be so for securing the independence of the states of Southern Germany. All the difficulties in the way of carrying out this proposal seemed—one would think only to Napoleon III. and M. Benedetti—to be got rid of, when, at the last moment, Count Bismark began to suggest

doubts, not only of the expediency of the alliance, but of the good faith of France in a scheme which might involve Prussia in a war with England. Still—again assuming his friendly and favourable tone—the Prussian chancellor said that the question of this alliance might remain open for further consideration, and till after he could discover how King William would feel on the subject; and meanwhile Count Bismark would do anything in his power to facilitate the French acquisition of Luxemburg. The King of Holland was the sovereign of Luxemburg, and could dispose of it as he pleased; and the Prussian chancellor would not only not claim its entry into the North German Confederation, but would oppose its entry, if it were demanded, in the Parliament. He suggested that the French should, by the aid of bankers, commercial travellers, and the like agents, get up demonstrations to convince the King of Prussia that the inhabitants of the Grand Duchy had no desire that the Prussian garrison should remain there, and that he might withdraw it without failing in any of his royal duties. Only, he said, he could have nothing to do with the negotiations; he must remain ignorant of them till they were completed; and then, if they were completed before the meeting of the Reichstag, he not only reckoned on being able to overcome any scruples his sovereign might have entertained had he known of the matter in its unfinished stage, but he would undertake "to make Germany swallow the pill." And then the alliance, with its secret as well as its open convention—an alliance on which, after all, the chancellor set great value—might be completed.

There were indeed warning voices opposing themselves to the too ready acceptance of the frank and bluff assurances—sometimes friendly, sometimes rather rude—of the Pomeranian squire. There came well-founded information of enormous military ar-

maments and warlike preparations throughout Prussia, and secret military treaties (destined to bear fruitful results three years later) with the states of Bavaria, Wurtemberg, Baden, and Hesse. But the French emperor, after a momentary burst of indignation, fell back under the magic influence which was guiding him whither Count Bismarck would, though he did insist on reforms in the French army-organisation, which he put under the direction of the able Maréchal Niel. This reform gave Count Bismarck an opportunity of suggesting that he was afraid of the intentions of France: and, among other specimens of the versatility of his resources, he about this time suggested that "they should light a fire together in Turkey, at which they could warm themselves together, and out of the ashes find the means of gratifying their common ambitions." It was in the midst, too, of the negotiations for annexing Belgium to France that England was informed by Count Bismarck himself of the scheme: and the astute Belgian minister, M. Nothomb, was enabled to bring about the marriage of the Count of Flanders with the Princess Maria of Hohenzollern, and so to secure for Belgian independence the dynastic sympathies of the King of Prussia. But M. Benedetti was assured that Count Bismarck had been no party to these proceedings, but indeed had warned the father of the bride of the instability of the Belgian throne.

The French emperor's prospect of "compensation" was now reduced to his chance of getting Luxembourg; and perhaps it is not contrary to the dignity of such very undignified history to say that we are irresistibly reminded of the story of the Irishman, who, having vainly applied for the Chief-Secretaryship, and then run down the whole scale of political and domestic offices, at last said to the Viceroy, "Could your honour give me an ould coat?" Luxembourg, however, it must be admitted, was not

without a traditional, and perhaps a practical, value in the eyes of France. Nature, art, and the jealousies of neighbouring sovereigns had for centuries combined to give importance to this little territory. A great rock on the edge of the country which has been called the cockpit of Europe, crowned with fortifications, of which the last were the work of the great Vauban himself, it had given emperors to Germany and kings to Bohemia and Hungary: it had belonged successively to the houses of Burgundy, Spain, Hapsburg, and Nassau, and was held by Louis XIV. of France: the diplomacy of Richelieu, Mazarin, and Fleury was always directed to its possession by France: it reappears as the price proposed to France for her consent to the annexation of Bavaria by Joseph II. in 1783: and by the treaty of Campo-Formio in 1797 the dream of the old French diplomats was realised for a time, while it became the French outpost against Germany. But in 1815 the Congress of Vienna reversed its political position, brought it into the Germanic Confederation under the King of the Netherlands as its Grand Duke, entrusted its military occupation to Prussia, and so made it a part of the great system of the defence of Europe along the eastern frontier of France. In 1830 the people of Luxembourg joined the revolt of Belgium against Holland, and united themselves to the former country: but Leopold was soon compelled by Prussia and Austria, though very reluctantly, to give up this acquisition to his new kingdom; and then Louis Philippe tried hard to get it again for France. Lord Palmerston's correspondence first made public the miserable intrigues and efforts of the aged Talleyrand to secure something in the scramble, and how he vainly turned to Prussia when the English Foreign Office was inexorable. "No nibbling," said Lord Palmerston: "if the Great Powers once get a bite they will not stop till

they have eaten the whole cake." M. Rothan reminds us that similar schemes—for annexing Belgium as well as Luxemburg—had not long before been proposed by Charles X., and he compares these with their revival by Louis Napoleon, and all under the influence of the same motive of hoping to allay discontent at home by the *prestige*—conjuror's trick, as Mr. Freeman has happily explained the word—of a territorial acquisition.

The King of Holland was sovereign of both the Duchy of Limburg and the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg, though by different titles, and both were members of the old Germanic Confederation. The possible attitude of Prussia to them, and to Holland itself, after the war of 1866, was a matter of great anxiety to the king. Prussia might demand that the connection of Limburg and Luxemburg with the old Germanic Confederation should be transferred to the new Northern Confederation: she might give practical effect to the regrets of military statesmen that at the settlement of 1815 Prince Hardenberg had consented to give up the fortresses of Maestricht and Vanloo, instead of making them part of the German system of defence: she might in her thirst for aggrandisement endeavour to bring Holland within her network of commercial, military, and maritime treaties: and Luxemburg itself might become the object of a contest between France and Prussia, of which Holland would have to bear the consequences. The king was therefore not disinclined to listen to the proposals of the French emperor that Luxemburg should be ceded to France, and Limburg released from all claim on the part of Germany; while France should pay an indemnity in money, and also guarantee the undisturbed possession of Limburg against all future pressure of Prussia, whether moral or material. While Limburg was an integral part of the monarchy, though hitherto artificially attached to the German Confederation,

Luxemburg was a personal fief of the king, and could be surrendered by his sole will, without reference to the Dutch Parliament. The queen, always friendly to the French emperor, supported the scheme, as did the Prince of Orange. But on the other hand, Prince Henry of the Netherlands, the king's brother, and his lieutenant-general in the Grand-Duchy, was opposed to the cession, as was his wife, a Princess of Weimar, and niece of the King of Prussia: it was known that they corresponded with Berlin, and more or less reflected the sentiments of that court: and when the French Government began to act on the advice of Count Bismarck in preparing the minds of the inhabitants of Luxemburg for the *plebiscite* in which they were expected to declare their spontaneous desire for annexation to France, the lieutenant-general made a formal protest through his diplomatic representative at the court of the Tuilleries. Still Count Bismarck assured all parties concerned—the French emperor, the King of Holland, and their respective ministers and ambassadors at Paris, Berlin, and the Hague—that he approved and advised the arrangement, and would at the proper moment allow its completion by withdrawing the Prussian garrison. It was true that he had not yet found the disposition of his sovereign favourable to his bringing the matter before him, but the Minister of War and the Chief of the Staff, the Generals von Roon and von Moltke, had at last admitted that the retention of this military position was not of the great importance they had originally supposed, and when the inhabitants of Luxemburg had declared their desire for the change, and the arrangement with Holland had been completed, the King of Prussia would no doubt eventually acquiesce in what had become inevitable. But meanwhile Prussia must know nothing: the negotiations must be carried to completion by France and Holland alone. This was the shortest and the safest way, the chancellor said: and he

repeated to Prince Napoleon in 1868 that it was not his fault, but the want of energy on the part of the French Government, that the scheme was not so carried out. The negotiations with Holland continued through the last months of 1866 and the first of 1867; and notwithstanding occasional changes in the demeanour of Count Bismarck or of the Prussian ambassador, and the warnings from other quarters of military preparations in Prussia, the Emperor Napoleon was sanguine of success. But it presently became more and more plain, that notwithstanding the mostly smooth and pleasant surface of the course which the negotiations were taking, there was a hostile current below. Prince Henry of the Netherlands not only raised objections, but pressed them with bitter reproaches: the Reichstag was about to meet in Berlin: and Count Bismarck hinted that he might have some difficulty in replying to questions about Luxemburg, unless indeed he could say that the matter was settled, and without his having had any responsibility for it; and that the press was beginning to call for a patriotic resistance to the humiliation of the army by a withdrawal from this important fortress.

The King of Holland, who had at first objected to treat, except openly, had afterwards consented to the secrecy of the negotiations between Napoleon and himself; but both the king and his ministers were now convinced that it was most dangerous to proceed except with the full consent of Prussia. They distrusted the assurances of Count Bismarck's good intentions; they feared to be involved in a war with Prussia; and they knew that in the actual condition of the French armaments, an alliance with France against Prussia would mean defeat with all its consequences. And when (on the 18th of March, 1867) the *Official Gazette* of Berlin had published the secret treaty of the 21st of August 1866 with Bavaria,—in defiant answer, it was said, to the denuncia-

tions of Prussian aggrandisement by M. Thiers in the French Chamber which had just met,—the King of Holland refused to proceed without the explicit consent of Prussia and of the other Powers who had signed the treaties of 1839. There was great alarm and anxiety at the court of the Tuilleries: the telegraph was at work day and night between Paris and the Hague: and M. Benedetti was instructed to press for a clear declaration on the part of Prussia. Count Bismarck replied that the king was too anxious as to the effect which the cession of Luxemburg to France might have in Germany to allow himself openly to consent to it. He spoke of his own difficulties in dealing not only with the king but with the Parliament, and with the disposition of public opinion. He could not authorise any one to say that Prussia had agreed with France that the latter should have Luxemburg: on the contrary, if he were questioned, he should be obliged to express, if not regret, yet a certain sadness of feeling. If he could have trusted the discretion of the King of Holland, he would gladly have avowed his own views and wishes; but as it was he could only—if applied to by that king—say that the King of Holland could dispose of his own rights of sovereignty as he pleased, in a way to imply that Prussia would not interfere with him in so doing. But at the same time he should so weigh his words as to be able to declare in Parliament that the assent of Prussia had not been given; only adding that if Germany had reason to regret the cession of Luxemburg to France, it could not have made this a cause of complaint against the King of Holland, who was only acting within his own rights. Then the German press became more and more violent against the cession of Luxemburg, and Count Bismarck became colder and more cautious, and even hinted—to the great indignation of M. Benedetti, who declared that the terms were those of the conqueror to the conquered—that the Prussian

troops might have to destroy the fortifications before they evacuated them. Then Count Bismarck—the conversation was at a ball which he gave on the 27th of March—turned the subject to the approaching International Exposition at Paris, for which his sovereign hoped to accept the emperor's invitation. The French ambassador hesitated to decide whether all this meant that the Prussian minister still wished the negotiations with the Hague to be carried out: but after a consultation with the Dutch ambassador, they agreed to telegraph to their respective governments to make haste, as public opinion in Berlin was become more and more hostile to the cession. Three days later, after what M. Rothan calls a supreme effort of *la diplomatie occulte* (apparently a sufficiently large payment in money to the King of Holland), all the difficulties were smoothed down. The Prince of Orange brought to Paris the written consent of his father: the treaties of cession and of guarantee were laid before the king and his ministers for signature on the 1st of April:—when M. de Zuylen, the Dutch minister, objected that the signature of the President of the government of Luxembourg was a necessary form, and proposed that the signing should be put off till the next day.

Meanwhile, the clouds were gathering. On the same day that the Prince of Orange had brought his father's consent, news reached Paris that Prussian troops were moving on Luxembourg; the *Official Gazette* of Luxembourg declared itself authorised to deny that any cession was intended; and—what was more serious—the sudden and unexpected question was put by the Prussian ambassador, Count von Bernstorff, to Lord Stanley, the English Secretary for Foreign Affairs—What would be the attitude of England, if war broke out between France and Prussia? And on the 1st of April (if I have rightly checked M. Rothan's rather confused and erratic dates),

at eleven o'clock at night, M. de Goltz, the Prussian ambassador at Paris, presented himself at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with a scared look, to tell the minister, M. de Moustier, that the Luxembourg business was going as badly as possible; and to urge him, in view of the excitement in the Prussian parliament, the irritation of public opinion, and the hostile feeling of the army, to break off the negotiations at once. M. de Moustier replied that the matter was already settled, showed him the despatch which had been sent the day before with the particulars to M. Benedetti; and added that after the confidence which the French Government had showed M. de Bismarck throughout, they were justified in asserting that they had been betrayed; that they took on themselves all the responsibility, and that the fear of war should not make them draw back one inch. M. de Goltz listened in silence to the end, and only answered with a sneer that it would be very absurd to fight for so small a thing as Luxembourg.

The Reichstag now met, and the chancellor was questioned by Herr von Bennigsen, in a speech of patriotic enthusiasm, as to the truth of the rumours of the cession of Luxembourg to France. The reply was cautious:—It was true that there were some negotiations pending between Holland and France, but the Prussian Government was not aware whether a treaty had actually been signed: the King of Holland, as Grand Duke, had thought himself bound to consult the King of Prussia, but the latter had replied that before giving an opinion he must consult the other signatories of the treaty of 1839, and take into consideration the public opinion, of which the Parliament was the authorised organ.

The Emperor Napoleon was indignant, and resolved not to give way. He conferred with General Trochu, and discussed plans with General Lebeuf, who now remained permanently at the Tuilleries. Maréchal Niel urged on the making of chassepots, bought horses,

and replaced the *matériel* lost at Mexico. The African army received orders to concentrate on Bona and Algiers; the divisions of the south were ordered towards Lyons. Nor were the preparations of Prussia less active. And when the French Government—taking the position that it was not possible to allow Prussia to interfere in the arrangements which two independent sovereigns might think fit to make between themselves—called on the King of Holland to sign the treaties at once; and just as the king, hearing from Berlin that the chancellor would not really object, was about to yield, the Prussian ambassador was announced. He came to declare that while the King of the Netherlands was free to act as he thought fit, he must take the responsibility of so doing, for the Cabinet of Berlin, in face of the expression of public opinion in Germany, must consider the cession of Luxemburg to France as a declaration of war. There was no need to add the fact that the Prussian army was concentrating towards the frontier, or that Luxemburg, with its garrison not withdrawn, but already strengthened, was to support the left wing of a force which only waited the order to cut all communication between France and Holland. The Dutch minister courteously but firmly refused to sign. Count Bismarck had no need to move again. If France, practically unarmed, accepted the challenge, she was lost; if she shrank back, her *prestige* was damaged, and her weakness confessed in the face of Europe. In either case the destiny of Germany was accomplished, and her ascendancy in Europe established. The Emperor of the French, as M. Rothan says, was checkmated.

It was absolutely necessary to find a means of retreat, with as little loss of dignity and honour as might still be possible. M. de Moustier, the French minister, had already been preparing the ground, while his master was still insisting on his demands. He had found Austria and

England not only not unfavourable to the annexation of Luxemburg, but willing to support France in the negotiations, while Russia held an equivocal tone. And now an appeal, veiled in the decorous diplomatic forms of national self-importance, was made to the signatories of the treaty of 1839, not as judges of the right of France to Luxemburg, but of the right of Prussia to garrison the fortress. The French and the Prussian ministers gave their respective stories of the past negotiations in the usual circulars to their ambassadors. Count Bismarck hardly concealed from the French ambassador his sympathy with the growing eagerness for war at Berlin; while M. Benedetti was instructed to yield to no provocation, and to give Count Bismarck no opening, under any circumstances, for a quarrel. The emperor now sent for Lord Cowley, and desired him to ask not merely for the good offices, but for the mediation of England. Lord Augustus Loftus, our minister at Berlin, received pressing instructions in the interests of peace from the English Foreign Secretary, Lord Stanley (now Lord Derby), together with a letter from Queen Victoria to King William—to the effect of which letter the diplomatist of the Second Empire naturally attaches more importance than suggests itself to an Englishman accustomed to the belief that his own sovereign reigns but does not govern. And though Count Bismarck had vanished to Varzin, and did not reappear for five days, during which his representative at the ministry declared he had no instructions, at the end of that time—on the 26th of April—the Prussian Cabinet announced its consent to the opening of a conference in London, on the basis of the neutrality of Luxemburg under the guarantee of Europe,—which plainly implied its evacuation. Now began that hair-splitting so dear to the smaller diplomats who register, while they fancy they are directing, the decisions of the statesmen who really control and guide the wills and

passions of nations and their kings. The Cabinet of Berlin did not refuse the idea of evacuation, but did refuse Lord Stanley's proposal to make it the basis of the deliberations. Count von Bernstorff declared in London that under no circumstances would Prussia withdraw its garrison, while M. de Thile at Berlin denied that he had any authority for so saying. There was indeed a hard struggle going on between the advocates for war in the interest of Prussia and those for peace in that of Europe. But what can be said except "tweedledum and tweedledee," of the question whether the conference should be convoked by the Signatory Powers or by the King Grand Duke? Then Lord Stanley refused to join in any guarantee of neutralisation which could involve England in the obligation to go to war; and at ten o'clock on the 7th of May, the day and hour fixed for the conference, Count von Bernstorff announced that without such guarantee his government would not appear. Baron de Bruinow, the Russian ambassador, was equal to the occasion. He devised a formula for a guarantee, not individual nor separate, but collective. This admitted of an elastic interpretation, and Lord Stanley was able to tell the House of Commons that our guarantee involved only a "limited liability." So this question, which after so many months had nearly ended in war, was settled on the terms of the neutralisation of Luxemburg, the withdrawal of the Prussian garrison, and the demolition of the fortifications. Paris, with its wonted facility of passing from one emotion to another, gave itself up to the festivities of the Exposition Universelle now opened, and welcomed among its royal and noble guests not only the King of Prussia, but his terrible minister himself. Prussian generals and statesmen did not at once conceal their regrets that the opportunity for a war with France at

a moment when she was more unprepared than she would be ever likely to be again, had slipped from them. Englishmen can remember how the Prussian ambassador in ordinary London society said openly that England had deprived Germany of an opportunity such as would not occur again, of taking at a disadvantage an enemy with whom war after all was inevitable. Whether Count Bismarck himself held this view, and had, at the last moment, yielded to the pressure of the European Powers when he had elaborately prepared for war, and had believed that the decisive moment had come; or whether he was master of the situation throughout, and had seen that there were sufficient reasons for a further interval before the supreme hour arrived; or whether, he was content to deal with events and circumstances as they arose; it would be premature and presumptuous to pronounce. But at least it may be said that the estimation of his capacity and his power as a statesman rose higher still than before both in Germany and in Europe. While his statecraft was even more versatile and unscrupulous than that with which it matched itself in the policy of the Emperor of the French, it is plain that he came out of the contest as the victor; that he showed unvarying strength of judgment and of will, while his opponent was always infirm and weak of purpose. And it may be added that however unscrupulous the means of the great chancellor, his end—the unity of Germany—was noble; while that of Napoleon—the support of his despotism by pandering to the national vanity of his subjects—was mean and base. That the actual policy was that of the emperor himself, and that his ministers and diplomatists only carried out his plans and orders, M. Rothan loses no opportunity of assuring his readers.

EDWARD STRACHEY.

DEATH AND LIFE.

IN MEMORIAM JULY 18, 1881.

O DEATH ! how sweet the thought
 That this world's strife is ended ;
 That all we feared and all we sought
 In one deep sleep are blended.

No more the anguish of to-day
 To wait the darker morrow ;
 No more stern call to do or say,
 To brood o'er sin and sorrow.

O Death ! how dear the hope
 That through the thickest shade,
 Beyond the steep and sunless slope,
 Our treasured store is laid.

The loved, the mourned, the honoured dead
 That lonely path have trod,
 And that same path we too must tread,
 To be with them and God.

O Life ! thou too art sweet ;
 Thou breath'st the fragrant breath
 Of those whom even the hope to meet
 Can cheer the gate of death.

Life is the scene their presence lighted ;
 Its every hour and place
 Is with dear thought of them united,
 Irradiate with their grace.

There lie the duties small and great
 Which we from them inherit ;
 There spring the aims that lead us straight
 To their celestial spirit.

All glorious things, or seen or heard,
 For love or justice done,
 The helpful deed, the ennobling word,
 By this poor life are won.

O Life and Death ! like Day and Night,
 Your guardian task combine ;
 Pillar of darkness and of light,
 Lead through Earth's storm till bright
 Heaven's dawn shall shine !

A. P. STANLEY (1880).

THE EDUCATIONAL QUESTION IN BELGIUM.

A STRUGGLE of unusual severity has been raging for two years in Belgium. The conflict is but one phase of the burning antagonism between the papacy and modern thought which prevails throughout Western Europe, but is the more significant from its occurrence in the ancient stronghold of Catholicism. Nowhere are the opposing parties, Liberal and Catholic, more clearly defined. The whole country, urban and rural, is divided into two hostile camps. Every commune, every village, is split into sects, and has its Catholic and Liberal butcher, baker, and *cafetier*, whose *clientèle* is strictly limited by political partisanship. It is no exaggeration to say that the discussion and treatment of the educational question has stirred the entire nation to its depths, has awakened controversies which have penetrated the remotest agricultural districts of the kingdom, and has roused a spirit which in all probability will profoundly influence its future policy.

A few words may serve to explain how the conflict has arisen. By the Belgian constitution, primary schools, unsectarian in character, and free to all who could not afford to pay for instruction, were to be established in every commune. The law was, however, regarded as merely permissive, and to avoid expense schools under the control of religious orders were in many districts *adopted* by the commune, and partly supported by local taxation. In 1842 political exigencies made clerical support indispensable to the party in power. The demands of the Roman Church in the matter of education are sufficiently ample, and they were practically all conceded. The Belgian parliamentary report on the *Loi Scolaire* of 1879 affirms that

in every stage, from the normal to the primary schools, the authority of the Church was supreme, that of the State was subordinate. The priesthood exercised a veto over the appointment of all teachers and the adoption of all books, and to such purpose was this authority wielded, that, save in a few rare instances in the largest towns, the Church had obtained a complete monopoly of education throughout Belgium.

This condition of things was not likely to be tolerated by a Liberal majority, and in 1879 it was determined to revert to the constitutional basis of national education. Absolute liberty of conscience was enacted, the authority of the State in official schools re-asserted. The teaching of any dogma hostile to the creed of Catholicism was strictly prohibited. No religious symbol was to be removed from the schools, but the priest was henceforth to be invited to continue, as pastor, the religious instruction he had hitherto given as a master. On his refusal, the official teacher might teach the letter, but not explain the meaning, of the catechism. It was further enjoined that State schools on this basis should forthwith be established in every commune.

No sooner was the design of the government known than it elicited the most determined opposition from the Catholic party. A papal allocution was pronounced formally condemning it, and episcopal instructions were issued in every diocese, and read from every pulpit, warning all good Catholics against any longer sending their children to the communal schools, which would by one fatal stroke suddenly become schismatical, heretical, and atheistic. In vain was it pointed out that if the priests would only

accept the invitation urged upon them to continue their catechising, nothing would be changed in the routine of the schools. Long before the *projet du loi* could come into operation, the direst evils were foretold as the inevitable results of its adoption. Special emphasis was laid upon the circumstance that whilst religious teaching was in future to be optional, gymnastics would be compulsory; and that youths thus trained to agility without religion would grow up a generation of house-breakers and criminals. Immoral books, not yet indeed introduced into the schools, were ready packed, and would be foisted in at a convenient opportunity. If any morality survived, it would be tainted with the indefinite and indescribable poison of freemasonry. "The Christ"¹ was to be banished from every communal school. To avert such evils a new petition was added to the Litany: "From schools without God, and teachers without faith, good Lord deliver us." These warnings were enforced by severe ecclesiastical penalties against such as should disregard them. Except under special extenuating circumstances, to be in every case referred to and decided by the bishop of the diocese, all persons connected with the national schools—teachers, members of the school committee, and scholars, with their parents and even their remoter relatives—were to be subjected to a general refusal of the sacraments, even *in articulo mortis*, unless they gave evidence of genuine repentance.

The *Enquête Scolaire* affords superabundant proof of the anguish inflicted by these spiritual terrors. Without confession, no absolution; without absolution, no grace; without grace, no possible salvation, is the creed of Catholic priest and people; and as soon as, at confession, the avowal was made that the penitent in any way supported the official schools, the little door of the confes-

¹ A crucifix is always found in a Belgian schoolroom.

sional was closed, and the suppliant dismissed unabsolved. Delicate pregnant women have had their apprehensions terribly aggravated by the withholding of a spiritual solace, universally sought and specially valued at such a season. The calm that should soothe and solemnise the dying bed has been broken and distracted by angry recriminations, by fierce insistence upon vows that have been commonly made only to the ear to be broken to the hope, by the outward admission of a fault which the inner conscience did not allow, by the reluctant, and, as we should deem it, worthless concessions, wrung from the fears of persons physically and mentally enfeebled to the last extremity, and in the immediate presence of death. More than one medical witness asserts that death has been accelerated by the spiritual agony thus occasioned. In some cases the dying person's confession has been abruptly cut short that the priest might obtain the instructions of his bishop—so abruptly, that in one instance *le bon Dieu* was left upon the table of the sick chamber, the poor moribund all the while torn by uncertainty and the fear of dying before the bishop's answer could be obtained. After all, the submission, extracted at a cost which has strained the relation of priest and people to the utmost, has generally proved worthless. It is the concurrent testimony of nearly all the witnesses, that extreme unction and Christian burial once secured, the survivors have held themselves absolved from promises thus extorted, and have continued to send their children to the communal schools.

My own introduction to a knowledge of this state of things was brought about in a somewhat amusing manner. I had observed in every Belgian church a large money-coffer, surmounted by the papal arms and tiara, with the word "Jubilee" below them, and I wanted to obtain some small *brochure* which should explain to me the meaning and purpose of the "Jubilee." I accordingly

selected a bookseller's shop in a flourishing country town—a shop whose window was filled with religious books, rosaries, crucifixes, and such other sacred emblems as are dear to the faithful of the Roman obedience. I stated my wishes, and the bookseller mounted a ladder to find the work I asked for, when a sudden inspiration seized him. "Are you Catholic?" he asked. I admitted I was not in the sense in which he used the term, and he then burst forth with amazing volubility into an explanation of the educational conflict. "There is no religion in it," he asserted; "the struggle is not for doctrine, but for domination. Our dean never preaches about the Gospel now—it is always on polities. They have put the Pope above God, but on earth *la patrie* must come first. Fortune, children, wife (his own was out of ear-shot), everything must yield to *la patrie*." I could not abstain from asking how such sentiments were in keeping with his trade. "That is purely a matter of commerce," he replied; "and on further inquiry you would find my opinions very generally held, even in this most Catholic town."

On pursuing this clue I was recommended to obtain the *Enquête Scolaire*—the report of a parliamentary commission of Belgian representatives appointed in June, 1880, to inquire into the moral and material position of elementary education in Belgium. Before giving some further account of the matter as illustrated by this document, it may be well to mention that it already extends over a thousand folio pages, that four thousand witnesses have been examined, and that every one has been at liberty to tender his evidence to the commissioners who have travelled in sections over the whole country in fulfilment of their commission. It should be added that all the witnesses have been examined upon oath, and have admitted the accuracy of the *précis verbal* drawn up by the secretaries to the commission for publication.

It requires an effort for men accustomed to English freedom of discussion to credit the dogmatism and intolerance of the Catholic party on the education question. Its fundamental principles are thus clearly laid down in a pamphlet which bears the imprimatur of the Belgian Primate, the Cardinal Archbishop of Malines.

"1. The Church alone has the right to teach religion.

"2. The Church has the right to control all branches of instruction which are combined with instruction in religion.

"3. Any government concerning itself with education is bound to recognise these rights of the Church.

"4. In regard to education, religious or scientific, all Catholics are subject to the Church, and bound to accept its decisions."

The theory is crisp and definite. Its practical application has been stern and logical. Minute episcopal instructions were issued for the guidance of confessors and their flocks. The following decision of the Congregation of the holy office was promulgated and adopted:—1. That the official schools could not be frequented with a safe conscience. 2. That so great a danger should be avoided at any risk of worldly interests, or even of life itself.

As soon as the decision of the ecclesiastical authorities was announced, every effort was employed to persuade the teachers of communal schools to desert them for the charge of the clerical schools. The majority of schoolmistresses were *réligieuses*, and these universally sided with the *parti prêtre*. Whatever their motives, we cannot compliment these ladies on the line of action they selected. To disguise as long as possible their real intentions, to postpone their resignation to the last moment in order to cause the greatest possible difficulty in supplying their places, and to strip the schools they were leaving of furniture and apparatus to which they had no lawful claim, and which they

were subsequently compelled to restore, is not consistent with ordinary notions of honourable dealing. In one place the *rélieuses* gave a written promise to remain at their posts over the communal school, and then left it, marching in solemn procession, with sacred banners flying, and accompanied by their scholars, as soon as the rival Catholic school buildings were ready for their reception. As only half the number of female teachers as compared with males had, up to 1879, been trained in the Belgian normal colleges, considerable disorganisation and inconvenience inevitably ensued for a time.

In the case of the male teachers the inducements to desertion were very great. They had commonly been on terms of intimate friendship with the parochial clergy. If they deserted, a salary was promised at least equal to that which they already received; if they refused they were threatened with personal hostility and ecclesiastical pains. It was besides suggested that the Liberal government would soon be overturned, and that the Catholic party would make short work of those who had resisted its demands. In many rural districts both land-owners and communal authorities were on the Catholic side, so that the teachers had to face a weary and disheartening struggle.

Three reasons only were recognised as valid excuses for continuing to teach in the communal schools. 1. Liability to military service. 2. Loss of a government pension in early prospect. 3. The failure of the curé to establish a Catholic school. But even under such circumstances, the episcopal permission to teach was weighted with the condition that the teacher should not give any religious instruction, and *should abstain from making any effort to increase the school* whose efficiency he was receiving public money to promote.

To their honour the scholastic body, the *rélieuses* alone excepted, universally stood firm; but their position

has been rendered almost intolerable. They have been burnt in effigy, gibeted in caricature, lampooned in libellous songs, composed, as a caustic witness phrases it, by clerical Bérangers. Neither the dignity of the priesthood, nor the sanctity of the pulpit, have availed to save them or their schools from the most scurrilous abuse. Heretics, schismatics, apostates, renegades, wolves in sheep clothing, Zulus, nihilists, rotten hearts, whitened sepulchres, apostles of Satan, men who go about to gather the largest possible harvest of souls for the devil, are a fair sample of the epithets applied to them. Nor have their schools fared any better. They are defined as places where children would learn, besides the three R's, to practise gymnastics, to live like brutes, and to die like dogs. "Send your children to a neutral school! better cut their throats at once!" cries one preacher. "They are filthy stink holes!" exclaims another. Nor have efforts been wanting to render this elegant description literally true. In many places the foulest indecencies have been committed in the school-rooms, whilst the teachers have been subjected to all the familiar miseries of "Boycotting." We are carried back to the records of mediæval superstition on reading of children solemnly exorcised from the special demons of national education, and of the grave assurance that the parish priest had seen the devil issuing from the mouth of a communal teacher. Special indignation has been manifested by the priesthood at the national teachers continuing, as heretofore, to superintend the conduct of their scholars in church. One schoolmistress, who persisted in occupying her accustomed bench, found that the seat had been purposely loosened, so that she was speedily overturned; another, as she clung to her place, was jolted up and down by the Catholic scholars, encouraged by the approving smiles of the *rélieuses*; a third found her seat prepared with nails and pins, the

points upwards. Such rancour has produced its natural results in arousing hostility rather than submission, and scandalous scenes have been enacted within the sacred walls. The exasperated teachers have clung with tenacity to their accustomed chairs, and when these were forcibly wrenched from them others have been supplied by sympathising bystanders, and the unseemly struggle prolonged. In one instance the officiating priest at high mass stripped off his sacrificial vestments, and marching to the spot where the communal scholars were quietly seated, refused to proceed until they had left the church. In another, a congregation of nearly a thousand persons were kept vainly waiting for a funeral mass, although the curé could be seen behind the high altar, until his *ukase* to the same effect was obeyed, and to avoid graver scandal the official schools and staff retired. In a third case, the celebrant interlarded the mass for the dead with lamentations over his own hard fate in being surrounded by schismatics; and then, descending from the altar, he prayed before the image of Saint Martin: "Oh great Saint Martin, patron of the parish of Amblevilliers, thou who didst always frequent Catholic schools, have pity on these poor little children, and deliver them from the hands of their hypocrite of a father!" No wonder that the congregation hissed. It has been a favourite innuendo to assert that the new law ensured the presence of at least one "*impie*" in every parish, or a Judas who sells his soul for a hundred francs—in allusion to the government grant for teaching the catechism. Several schoolmistresses complain of being intentionally drenched with holy water after service. A more frequent and serious trial has arisen where a national teacher desired the Church's rite of holy matrimony; as absolution was refused, there remained only the painful alternative, from a Catholic's point of view, of either living in concubinage or profaning a sacrament.

The most effective coercive weapon in the hands of the priesthood has been the refusal of the *première communion*. In the Roman Church children are admitted to their first communion at an early age, and in outward circumstances the occasion is the most important day in the life of a Catholic child. For the poorer children a special dress is provided from a charitable fund, such as the wearer will probably never possess again. The girls in their white robes and veils, relieved only by the blue ribbon of the Virgin, the boys in all the glory of broadcloth jackets, white trousers, and gloves—you may see them thus attired, with bare head and hair well brushed and oiled, and in dainty shining boots picking their way through the mud as they go on a round of visits to display their finery and receive the *cadeaux* of their friends; their parents following admiringly at a respectful distance so as not to mar so brilliant a spectacle. What child or what loving mother, all thought of spiritual advantage apart, could patiently bear exclusion from such delights? Accordingly there is abundant evidence that many children are temporarily withdrawn from the communal schools to secure admission to their first communion.

In their treatment of the scholars of the national schools the priesthood stand convicted, in the *Enquête Scholaire*, of unexpected, and, we believe, quite exceptional harshness. To keep them out in the cold at the church door waiting for their lesson in the catechism, which they are forbidden to receive from their own teachers; to thrust them into inferior places during divine service, whilst the children of the Catholic schools are ostentatiously brought to the front; to pass them by deliberately in the religious instruction, and apply to them injurious epithets, such as beggars, liberals, and even *damnés*—the mediæval term *gueux* seems to have been specially revived for their annoyance—to adopt every means which could

degrade them in the eyes of their fellows, and wound the sensitive feelings of childhood—this is not the worst part of what these poor helpless children have had to bear. Far more injurious to our mind has been the advice constantly given them in the confessional, that they should refuse to obey their parents, should play truant, feign sickness, submit to be beaten, bear anything rather than consent to go to the accursed schools. Indeed the discord kindled in family life has been among the gravest evils which have resulted from the Catholic claims in the education question.

This discord the priests have not hesitated openly to foment. In domiciliary visits, as well as in the confessional, women have been prompted to force their husbands to send the children to the Catholic schools. "Surely you are mistress," it is suggested, "you can do as you like. Every woman, if she will, can get her own way." And when it is replied, "No, my husband is master," resistance has been occasionally counselled in terms with which we should be ashamed to sully our pages. Sometimes the confessor meets with a deserved, if unexpected, rebuff: "What, Monsieur le Curé, do you teach obedience in the pulpit, and disobedience in the confessional!" Several witnesses bitterly complained that the peace of their homes had been wrecked by bickerings on this subject, which had ended in alienation, and the return of the wife to her own family.

Denial of the sacraments has been employed as the punishment for a wide range of educational misdemeanours. To send a child to the national school; to provide food or clothing for the parents of such scholars; to teach sewing in an adult neutral school; to give buns and coffee for refreshment at a large school gathering; to be the grandfather or grandmother of a national scholar; to be the near relative of any one engaged upon the official staff (although personally sympathising with the Catholic party),

without using all possible influence, even to the destruction of all domestic peace, to bring about a retirement from the condemned position; to receive a communal teacher as a lodger, or not forthwith to dismiss him, although he had been for years under your roof; to take private lessons from such a teacher preparatory to an examination for the civil service; even to be generally esteemed a non-Catholic elector—each and all of these have been held to be crimes of sufficient gravity to justify the refusal of absolution, and to peril the soul's salvation. Widespread has been the sorrow, and harrowing the death-bed scenes occasioned by this terrific discipline. Small matters deeply affect simple rustics whose range of thought spreads over a very limited area, and who therefore brood over points from which more educated persons may find distraction; but we can sympathize with the grief of a widow whose husband, for no other fault than that of supporting the national schools, was borne to his grave without the Christ, "like a thief," or thrust for burial into the corner reserved for suicides and reprobates. The pressure thus used has not been ephemeral; some witnesses affirmed that they had been excluded from the sacraments for three years; nor has it been mitigated by any gentleness in the performance of a painful task. It is simply brutal to say to a dying woman, "Quick, you have only two hours to live;" or in answer to the piteous entreaty, "I want to think no more about schools, I want to think only about God;" to turn to the husband with, "Idiot! now remember, when you are dying you shall have no confession, you shall perish like a dog with your devil's school."

No wonder that the net cast so wide as to inclose so vast a draught should have broken in many places. Overstrained assertion of authority has provoked stubborn resistance. The insistence of the curé that a mother should send at least two of her four

children to the Catholic school, was met with the unanswerable query, "Which two would you have me choose to be damned?" The assertion that M. Van Humbeeck, the Minister of Education, had said at a recent masonic lodge that Catholicism was but a corpse waiting for burial, elicited the rejoinder, "How strange that what passed at a secret meeting should be so well known!" The refusal of absolution to a penitent for taking part in works of charity provoked the demure reply, "To do good, then, is to do evil." "I believe in the devil, but not in your nonsense," is the pert, but pointed, retort of a child; but older and graver minds might possibly reach the conclusion expressed by several recalcitrants, that confession and absolution could not be "*grande chose*" since, although no sin had been confessed, absolution was refused. One penitent inquired whether if he received private lessons from the communal teacher he would escape the penalty incurred by attendance at the night school under the same master, and was assured that he would. "It is the school *walls* then," he observed, "that are sinful." This happy audacity deserved and earned absolution. A striking appeal to the Pope himself, made by a country gentleman of Courtrai, failed to receive any notice from his holiness.

It is the custom in Belgian village churches for the preacher to allude to current and local events. The well known accusation against the English clergy during the Irish famine of never venturing to mention the "potato" nearer than as "that root" or "that esculent," would not hold in the Low Countries. A spade is freely called a spade. Such a habit naturally leads to remarks which would astonish those who are accustomed to the decorum of an English pulpit; but even a Belgian congregation might well be startled at many examples of pulpit oratory recorded in the *Enquête Scolaire*. Unbroken testimony from hundreds of parishes affirms that since

the promulgation of the Belgian Education Act of 1879, the priests have abandoned all other topics, and have preached exclusively on politics. The government has been denounced from the pulpit in unmeasured terms, and even the king has been assailed as an atheistic hog. The ruling authorities have been declared to be worse than Herod, who only slew the bodies, whereas they would destroy the souls, of the little ones. Priestly authority is insisted on in the most uncompromising terms, and the Saviour's words unhesitatingly pressed, "He that heareth you, heareth Me." Sometimes the official teacher is apostrophised in imaginary dialogue. "So, then, teacher, you will give your instruction, despite the *cure*?" "Yes." "Despite the bishop?" "Certainly." "Despite the Pope himself?" "Still yes." "Well, then, if I meet this person I shall say to him, 'Good morning, Mons. le Pape.'" Sometimes the sermon treats of an approaching election, and then the congregation is informed that those who vote for the Liberals will vote for assassins, robbers, petroleurs, communists, nihilists. We string together a few pearls out of a great mass of this pulpit eloquence. "In our official schools, blasphemy, theft, and contempt for authority will be taught, and if a teacher sees one of his scholars going to commit a robbery he will say to him, Be careful, fear no one except the gendarmes." "The Liberals are a set without morals, for whom it is useless to pray or to say a mass, for they are in mortal sin from the 1st of January to the 31st of December."

One preacher wishes that the children were strong enough to punch (*empoigner*) their parents, and to hold their faces in the dirt until they were compelled to withdraw them from the communal schools. Another declares that all knowledge except that of the catechism leads to hell. A third asserts that the first politician was a fiend called Lucifer, who deceived Adam and Eve by a lie; so too all the

Liberals are liars, and when they speak the truth it is by mistake. The exclusive right of the Church to give religious teaching has been carried to the point of insisting that without her license a father ought not to teach his children the catechism, or even their prayers. At times the rudest personalities season the discourse. "I see some dirty fellows at the end of the church; if they come again I will give them a *coup de brosse*." "A young man came to insult me last night; one member of his family has already died mad, and if he goes on he will die mad too, and I will fire at him *dans les freises*." "There are some eating and drinking the savings of a worthy old priest, who, had he known the use that would be made of his money, would have thrown it into the sea." All such allusions are thoroughly understood by the audience, and applied to those at whom they are aimed. To compare the supporters of national education to the swine into whom the devils entered; to assert that the speaker would not touch a Liberal unless he had gloves on; that it were better to stab a man than to accept from him a Liberal newspaper; that only persons living in concubinage would send their children to a national school; that a recent assassination was less criminal than to adopt such a mode of education—these are specimens of the language which the priests have very generally allowed themselves. Even these excesses are surpassed by worse violations of decency, which, though uttered from the pulpit in the face of a Christian congregation, it were impossible to reproduce. But the palm of priestly impropriety must be awarded to the curé of Flamièrge, in the Canton de Sibret. "Brethren, I have not prepared a sermon for to-day. I am going to relate to you an incident in the life of the curé of Ars. This holy priest had merited by his virtues to be tempted by the devil, who attacked him in every guise. One night he was surrounded by demons, who made everything look fiery around him, so

that even his bed-curtains appeared to be in flames. Well, now, the other day I had almost the same dream; I too was surrounded by evil spirits," and with this preface the preacher proceeded to give a detailed description of the several fiends—a description in which the audience could recognise the portrait or caricature of the chief local supporters of the national schools. The congregation was so deeply incensed by this outrage that the terrified priest sent for his revolver before venturing to leave the church.

Such addresses have indeed frequently provoked recrimination from those who felt themselves assailed, and scandalous scenes have followed. One witness admits that, stung by what he regarded as insults and misstatements, he interrupted the preacher and left the church, after an angry dialogue—the curé all the while in the pulpit—never to re-enter it. Another, on the reading of an episcopal admonition, shouted in reply, "The bishop lies." Witness after witness testified to the mingled indignation and contempt such sermons had evoked: "It was no mass at which we assisted, it was a farce."

Scandals of this kind are naturally enough not confined to the walls of the church or the hours of public worship. The teaching at the school has been fully in harmony with that of the confessional and the pulpit. At Houffalize a sort of comedy was performed in the Catholic school, in which four of the scholars played the part of four members of the Government. One of these, in the character of the Minister of Education, buried Catholicism in a grave. Others represented and ridiculed the burgomaster and the schoolmaster of the commune. At Alhoumet the curé refused to confess the mayor's dying mother until her son paid the costs of a suit brought against him by the civic functionary for felling trees in the public cemetery.

We must pass over the charges of

bribery and intimidation which each side alleges against its opponents. Where party spirit runs high indiscreet and unjustifiable acts are sure to be committed by too ardent spirits. Yet it is painful to read repeated evidence of old servants heartlessly dismissed, of poor widows and orphans struck out of the lists for free instruction, or deprived of customary and much needed charity, of struggling shopkeepers ruined, and even of the boon of ice refused, or but grudgingly accorded, to fever-stricken patients, under the influence of religious bigotry. Parents in some districts must have reaped a rich harvest from the educational struggle. Loans of money, presents of clothing, leases of coveted plots of land have been bestowed with a lavish profusion that recalls examples of corruption nearer home. The Liberals affirm that the Catholic party possess the heavier purse, and that all the offerings of the faithful are now exclusively devoted to the maintenance of their schools; but no one can deny that the *parti prêtre* has made large sacrifices to carry out their principles, and as it is an apparent hardship that they should have to maintain a communal school staff even in the districts where the entire population prefers a Catholic school, they must not be judged severely if some of their schools are insufficient in structure and teaching power. The same plea, however, cannot avail to excuse the employment of disreputable teachers, or the adoption of filthy modes of punishment. Nor must it be forgotten that all this violence has been exercised to crush an educational system which until 1879 commanded the loud approbation of the priesthood, and which since that date rests unchanged—teachers, books, instruction all remaining as before—nothing being wanted save the occasional visits of the parochial clergy, and these they have been invited to continue.

What may be the ultimate issues of a struggle of which this dark picture is no exaggerated portrait, we cannot now discuss. Its immediate results have been in some few districts to weaken, even to empty, the national schools; but in other respects they have been very different from the expectations of those who so hotly hurried to the fray. The conflict has produced bitter division in parishes where harmony used to prevail. It has alienated vast numbers of her peaceful followers from the Church to which every tie of early training, long association, and personal inclination bound them. It has shaken the authority of the priesthood in districts where it was deemed to be immovable. It has driven a large proportion of the agricultural population, estimated in different districts from one-fifth to one-half, into the arms of the Liberal party. To men who care and pray for the maintenance of a rational Christianity, the position of these schismatics in spite of themselves is full of the deepest interest. Under such circumstances men find a painful difficulty in reconciling faith with freedom; yet many are gradually groping their way through the dark to a firm foundation. They cannot yield assent, even though an infallible Pope should affirm it, to the dogmatic assertion that it is evil to do good, to perform acts of charity, to inculcate morality, to teach the letter of a catechism lauded and accepted by the priesthood. We may believe that scores of really devout men and women have been brought to the admirably expressed decision of a national teacher, when urged under pain of spiritual penalties to desist from religious teaching: "God is my judge, and it is impossible that He should condemn me because I teach children to know Him and to love Him, for in that case He would no longer be God."

HENRY LEACH.

FORTUNE'S FOOL

CHAPTER XXXIII.

PROSPERITY.

IN WHICH BRYAN ATTEMPTS TO DO JACK A SERVICE BY PREVENTING HIM FROM UNDERTAKING A BURDEN; AND IT IS SHOWN HOW THE RUNNING OF MUCH WATER CANNOT WASH OUT BLOOD STAINS.

LADY MAYFAIR's masquerade took place on a Friday. On the Monday following Sinclair accompanied Jack to the place of embarkation; and Tom Berne was in attendance on his master.

Some hours were still to pass before the steamer sailed. There was an inn not far from the wharf, to which the party repaired. Jack's luggage having been sent on board, Bryan ordered dinner. It was served in a small parlour on the first floor, overlooking the quay. While it was getting ready, Bryan sat at the open window, while Jack paced up and down the room, occasionally pausing to send a glance towards the vessel that was to take him away. The neighbourhood was not an especially savoury one. The adjoining houses were used partly as shops for the sale of marine stores, and partly as sailors' lodgings. The street was roughly paved and ill-kept, and was shuffled over by the feet of tipsy seamen and professional blackguards. A wrangling dispute was going on in the bar-room of the inn; occasionally an oath or two would find its way up to the parlour window. Policemen were scanty; it was hardly worth while to protect such people as these against one another. It would have been easy to find a place almost as handy to the quay, and much more respectable; but Bryan, who professed familiarity with the locality, had re-

commended *The Silver Anchor*, and Jack had offered no objection. Indeed, he was so engrossed with thoughts of what lay before him, that he paid little heed to his surroundings.

"Anxious to be off, eh?" said Bryan, thrusting his hands in his pockets and stretching out his legs. "Tired of England in two months?"

"I mean to come back again when I've got what I'm going for."

"Still convinced you'll get it, eh, in spite of all my warnings? I tell you again, you'll be disappointed. I know quite as much about the business as your mysterious informant—who, by the by, is not such a mystery to me as you imagine. Hear reason, Jack, though at the eleventh hour. If those papers had been in existence, they'd have turned up long ago. And without them where are you? Much better stay where you are. Eh!—come now!"

"I shall find them," said Jack, with undisturbed confidence. "Some one has been keeping them for me—my grandfather, I suppose. When he found that I had run away that night, he hid the papers, and is waiting till I come back. I shall be Baron Castlemere."

"Ah, this is some of your confounded clairvoyance again. You've been seeing visions and dreaming dreams. If that's the case, you're past argument. Now, what if I should take a leaf out of your book, and prophesy your death with a hole through your head? That's what you did to me not so very long ago. Would that make you reconsider your rash purpose? Suppose I say, if you start on this wild-goose chase, you'll never get back alive?"

Jack laughed, and shook his head.

"The Baron Castlemere will get back alive," he said.

"What the deuce has given you this sudden hankering after greatness?" resumed Bryan, after a pause. "A few weeks ago you were an arrant republican, if not a communist. Now nothing will satisfy you but to join the English aristocracy. Why not stick to your clay, man? Any fool can be an English nobleman, if he happens to be born in the right place; but nobody but you can be Jack the animal sculptor. You can get fame and profit, and all the world will talk of you; but as Baron Castlemere you'll be a big nobody with thirty thousand a year. What's got into you?"

Jack seated himself on the windowsill, and folded his arms.

"I'm not the same that I was," he said. "When I thought I was the son of nobody, I could do what I liked. But now, I'm not myself—I am all my ancestors. Everything is changed."

"You would find things more changed than you imagine, if you became a baron," Bryan remarked. "A sculptor may have friends, but a baron not. I, for one, should be no friend of Baron Castlemere. A month ago I'd have given ten thousand pounds to do you a good turn; but I wouldn't turn on my heel to oblige Baron Castlemere. He doesn't interest me. Perhaps he's in my way. If you stood between me and a fortune, Jack, I'd let the fortune go; but if the baron interfered with me, I'd get rid of him. There's a fair warning for you!"

"I cannot change what is changed," said Jack.

The door opened, and a servant brought in dinner. Bryan told the man he need not wait; and when the two were alone again, he stood up and held out his hand.

"Good bye, Jack, my man," he said.

"It isn't time for that yet," said the other, surprised, but giving his hand nevertheless.

"Full time, Jack. It's to my old friend Jack I say good-bye, not to the baron. The baron be damned. Jack, I never cared for a man as I cared for

you, and I never shall again. If it had gone on, I might have ended with being canonised! So it's about time it stopped. Good-bye, old fellow. I don't blame you, and don't you blame me. It's fate—we can't help it. This is the last dinner we shall ever eat together." He gave Jack's hand a powerful gripe, and let it go. At the same time he cast aside his grim and grave bearing—which, indeed, was at variance with his customary demeanour—and exclaimed in his usual semi-jocose tone, "Now for victuals! We may talk as we like about society and the soul, but there's nothing in creation equal to a good dinner!"

They took their places at table, and Bryan was as genial and entertaining as only he could be when he laid himself out for it. His mental scenery was naturally warm and attractive in tone, and memory had enriched it with innumerable striking and amusing episodes from his past career. He rattled on, laughing himself, and making Jack laugh, saying any quantity of clever things, and treating life as if it were a game of billiards or a *Haymarket* comedy. There were a couple of bottles of excellent claret on the board, which Bryan had taken the precaution to bring with him; and he was careful to see that Jack's glass was never empty. "Nothing like smooth claret to counteract rough water," he observed. "Ah, Jack, how comfortably a man might go to heaven with a quart or so of this good stuff beneath his belt! 'Now to die were now to be most happy!' as your friend Othello remarked. What do you say?"

Before Jack could reply, the door partly opened, and Tom Berne's unconciliating visage appeared through the aperture.

"Might I speak a word with 'ee, sir?" he said to his master.

"What the devil have you come bothering about?" demanded Bryan, sharply. He got up, however, and went to the door, and after a moment passed out, and closed it behind him. For a minute or two Jack was left

alone. Then Bryan came back and reseated himself at the table.

"Only some of the fool's nonsense," he said, casting a peculiar fixed glance at his companion. "It's remarkable, though, what weight fools have in this world. They are the tyrants of wise men, and engines of destruction to everybody. That fellow, for example, was as much my slave as one creature can be the slave of another; and yet the very abjectness of his slavery makes him my master. He'll do anything I tell him, except the one thing I really want him to do—leave me; and I can't put him out of the way by murdering him, because, if I'm to be hanged, I can't afford to throw myself away upon such a *corpus delicti* as he. But that isn't all." Here Bryan interrupted himself, and poured out the last of the bottle into his own and his friend's glasses. "I drink to you, Jack," he said; "may the life which is before you be an improvement on the life you leave behind!" He emptied his glass and set it down.

"I may as well say it out," he resumed presently, in a heavier and slower tone. "I can draw a moral from myself as easily as from another man. You and I shall part soon, not to meet again, probably. You know the old fable about raising the devil and being unable to lay him again. You must find occupation for him. That seems easy enough—but the worst of it is, that the fact of the devil's being on hand suggests mischief that you would otherwise never have thought of. You seem to employ him, but really it's he employs you; for you are responsible for whatever he does. Suppose, say, that I have an enemy; and this enemy is bound to beat me. Now, being by nature a pugnacious, but amiable man, my natural course under those circumstances would be to use my fists as long as I could, and then to give in. But, as luck will have it, there's a devil in my service who suggests to me (or I suggest to him—it's all one)

that I shall turn the tables on my victorious enemy by murdering him. I therefore give orders to my devil (or he makes the offer—it's all one) to compass this murder. The murder is done!" Bryan brought his fist down heavily on the table. "The devil did it, but it was the devil in me. And the blow was really struck, not against my enemy, but against me—and it's a fatal blow! And the upshot of it is, that not the devil is the slave, but—— Hullo! what's that?"

The noise of voices raised in altercation had been for some moments audible, but just now they burst out louder and more furiously. Bryan left his chair and went to the window. "It's that scoundrel Tom," he exclaimed; "he's drunk again—there'll be mischief directly! Come with me, Jack—quick! come on!"

The wine had kindled Jack's blood, but had not yet dulled his senses. He sprang to his feet and hurried down stairs after Bryan.

A struggle was going on just outside the doorway of the inn. The combatants were Tom Berne and a brawny sailor, with a red shirt and shaggy black hair. The men had been sparring, and the sailor was bleeding at the mouth. A knot of men were looking on, critically; such scenes were too common to arouse any special excitement. Just as Bryan appeared, however, some one called out, "Look sharp, there! drunken chap's got a pistol!" And immediately there was a scattering back of the spectators. Tom, in fact, had drawn a revolver from a pocket of his coat, and was apparently watching his chance to cock it.

"You trip up the red-shirted fellow, Jack," Bryan said; "I'll take care of my man. Now then!"

Jack stepped up to the sailor from behind, took him by the shoulders, twisted him round across his knee, and laid him down gently. Then he stood erect.

Bryan, meanwhile, had rushed at

Tom and caught him round the body. There he held him firmly, but seemed unable to throw him, or even to move him. Tom's arms were free; the pistol in his right hand, which was passed over Bryan's left shoulder. The muzzle of the pistol moved until it was in line with the sailor, over whom Jack was standing; then it was lifted a little and discharged.

Jack was bareheaded. Those who happened to be looking at him saw the hair on the right side of his head fly up, as if struck by a sharp blast of wind. At the same instant he staggered, dropped to his knees, and then sank backwards, his brow and cheek covered with blood. Immediately after the sound of the discharge, Bryan lifted Tom from his feet like a child, and dashed him heavily to the earth.

"You'd ought to 'a done that afore, sir," said a bystander; "he's been and potted the wrong man. Dang they pistols, anyhow!"

Bryan turned slowly, saw Jack lying prostrate and bloody, and, standing still, asked—

"Is he dead?"

"Looks uncommon like it," observed a critic. "Pal o' yours, sir?"

"Taint only manslaughter, arter all," put in another. "'Twas 'tother cove 'e aimed at. That's the worst o' they blasted pistols. Knives is just as safe, and don't make no mistakes. Well, Mike Smith saved his bacon, howsumdever."

"You say it was an accident, then?" said Bryan, whose face was quite white, while his eyes avoided Jack's prostrate figure, and wandered from one to another of the surrounding group. "You're all sure of that? You saw it—I didn't."

"Ay sir—you won't get 'im 'ung for that—six months in quod, maybe"—were the responses of the spectators. "You giv' it 'im pretty 'earty yourself, sir," added one, referring to the seemingly inanimate condition of Tom, who had not stirred since Bryan threw him.

The attention of the group being thus drawn to a new object, Jack was, for the moment, left alone. Bryan approached him. After a brief hesitation he knelt beside him and raised his head on his arm. The position reminded him of their first meeting in California.

"The game is not worth the candle," muttered Bryan to himself. "I wish he were alive again, baron or not. Great God!—he is alive!" These words were whispered, and were accompanied by a strong convulsive tremor, which shook Bryan to the marrow of his bones. Jack had opened his eyes, sighed, and let the lids fall again. The bullet had but grazed the skull, stunning, not killing him. Bryan glanced up, no one was looking at them. His hand went lightly to Jack's throat; a little pressure there would still suffice. Bryan took his hand away, and shouted at the top of his voice, "Great God! he's alive!"

"So's this 'un, too," came from the group around Tom. "'Ere's a rum go! nobody hinjured after all! An' us has been a wastin' all this val'able time over 'em! Cheese it, mates! 'ere comes the bobbies!"

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It lacked still an hour of the time advertised for Jack's steamer to sail, and he had little difficulty in getting aboard in season. His recollection of what had occurred was naturally rather confused; and the loss of blood gave him a feeling of languor. "You were in luck, my man, as usual," were Bryan's last words to him as they parted at the gangway; "but never try to stop a bullet with your head again."

Jack watched his friend's departure pensively. His vague impression was that Bryan had somehow saved his life. At all events, he had dressed his wound with the skill and with more than the tenderness of a trained surgeon. As for that poor drunken reprobate, Tom, it was only at Jack's special intercession that Bryan had consented not to prosecute him for

attempted murder. Well, death was a strange country ; the world was worth staying in. It was a new world now. As the steamer left the harbour, and faced the western waves, Jack sought his berth and fell asleep. But his rest was disturbed. He dreamed of a masquerade in the Sacramento valley ; he held some one by the hand—a woman, with soft black hair and a melodious voice ; but her features were concealed by a mask. Then he snatched the mask away ; but, with a cry, he saw, not the face he had expected, but the reproachful countenance of Kooahi. Then an explosion rent the air ; something rushed down upon him ; he strove to escape, but could not ; he fell, and a vast weight crushed down upon him, and he knew that he was buried beneath the Witch's Head. He struggled desperately ; and, with a peal of harsh laughter in his ears that sounded like Bryan's, he awoke. The vessel was labouring in a heavy sea, the timbers creaked and groaned, and there was a throbbing pain in his head. Looking out of his port-hole window, he saw the moon shining athwart the tumultuous waters, and tall waves hurrying by in ragged haste, and lifting ghostly hands, and vanishing for ever. At last he slept again, and this time dreamlessly.

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The modest but deserving village of Suncook had, during these latter years, begun to look up in the world. Its harbour had been improved, its trade increased, and its population augmented. A rival hotel and several handsome private dwellings had been put up. A contractor had entered into negotiations for the building of a town-hall on the site now occupied by the old red house beneath the elm ; and the work was to be begun as soon as the present occupant should vacate the premises. And that was an event that had been for some time past expected, and might now occur any day ; for the occupant in question lay upon his death-bed. Old Mossy Jakes, after holding on to life with a

dreary tenacity that had wearied his most unexacting friends, was at last sinking away into the inoffensiveness of death ; he was dying, and with the hope of his latter days unrealised. A crazy and groundless hope it had been, as ever fretful senility was deluded by. An English lord, his grandson—Heaven save the mark !—was to come to Suncook, and declare himself, and receive Mossy Jake's blessing. Nor was this all ; the lordly grandson was to turn out to be identical with a certain worthless scamp of a half-wild urchin, who, years ago, had lived in the neighbouring woods somewhere ; until (as was generally believed) he one day was guilty of some escapade which made it necessary for him to escape punishment by shipping as cabin-boy aboard a West Indian trader lying at Newburyport. He had not since been heard of, and it was to be hoped he never would be ; yet it was no less a personage than this that poor Mossy Jakes had made the hero of his crazy dream. Well, well ; the graveyard would soon see the end of it ; and meanwhile—patience !

It was a morning in early June, and Suncook and its environs were at their loveliest. The season had been a late one, and the trees were in the first green freshness of their beauty. Blue-birds, with a flash of sky on their backs, were glancing from thicket to thicket. There were blackbirds about who could alternate their croakings with divine singing when they chose. High aloft, an eagle was wheeling meditatively between the forest below and the azure above. Here and there, from points of vantage, lines of sparkling ocean could be discerned through the happy foliage. Hares and striped chipmonks cantered and scuttled amidst the huckleberry bushes and along the out-cropping ledges of rock. And down the shadowy length of the winding ravine the twinkling brook wandered and delayed, and kicked up its baby heels over the stones. Jack, as he trod along the margin, with his

oaken staff in his hand, was continually marvelling at the unchanged aspect of this home of his boyhood, when, with the boy whose home it had been, so much was changed. By and by, however, he came upon something that was manifestly new—a flat stake, driven firmly into the ground, and painted white, with some numbers and letters inscribed upon it. It was a surveyor's mark, and indicated that some engineering operation was in contemplation here. In fact, a road was being laid out, which, for a considerable distance, was to follow the course of the ravine. After proceeding about a quarter of a mile further, Jack came upon unmistakable signs of the progress of the work.

A group of about a dozen men, most of them labourers with their shirt-sleeves rolled up over their brown elbows, were busy over a huge boulder, which lay in the very centre of the gorge, and was evidently an obstacle in the way of the further development of the road. Jack knew the boulder only too well ; he was the only human being—save two—who had been present when it assumed its present position. He approached one of the men, who was standing apart from the others and directing them, and after exchanging greetings with him, inquired what was being done.

"Well, sir, we're going to try and get that darned old lump out of the way," the overseer replied. "She's too heavy to lift, and she's too high to crawl over ; so we're going to try powder. I guess that'll do the job, if anything can."

"How did it get there?" Jack asked.

"Get there? Well, it growed there, I expect," the man replied, pushing back his straw hat and staring at the new comer. "It was before your time, I guess, or mine either."

"That's all you know about it, Silas Clarke," remarked another personage, who seemed to be in attendance merely as a spectator. "You ain't a Suncook man, or you'd a' known it fell down

there a matter of nine or ten years ago. It used to be perched up in front of the little cave yonder. It's queer thing, now," he continued, addressing himself obliquely to Jack, and pulling at the straw-coloured beard on his chin, "that cave was the home of a little chap—Jack they called him—a sort of half-wild little coon, that nobody knowd much about. And they do say—some of the folks hereabout—that when the stone toppled over, it caught him underneath, and that his bones are lying there at this minute."

"I guess it would take a pretty fair team of horses to draw that long-bow of yours, Minot," observed Mr. Clarke, with grave sarcasm. "You've got a sight of elbow-grease, for a thin man."

"You go 'long!" responded Minot, plucking a twig and chewing it. "All I know is, the little chap's never been seen nor heard of from then to now; and there was some would have set store by finding him, too; ask Mossy Jakes if there wa'n't."

"Does Mossy Jakes still live in the red house?" Jack asked.

"I expect he won't live there long ; but he'll live there till he dies, any way," answered Minot sententiously ; and then he added, with a more searching glance, "Ever been in these parts before, sir? I don't seem to recollect your features."

"Not for a good many years," said Jack, who recollected Minot well enough. "How soon will this blast come off?" he inquired, turning to Clarke.

"In about three minutes, I guess," replied that gentleman. "Maybe you'd like to stay, sir, and see if the bones of that little chap of Minot's are all right. How's that, Minot?"

"Oh, you go 'long!" said Minot ; "it ain't my story, any way."

Jack had reasons of his own for wishing to see the result of the blast ; although he certainly did not expect to find the bones of "Minot's little chap" underneath the boulder. The preparations being now completed, he withdrew with the others to the place

of shelter that had been prepared, and waited.

After a short interval, a sudden rumble, accompanied by a perceptible shock, was heard ; and fragments of granite fell round about. "Hold on!" exclaimed Clarke; "she's bored in three places." Almost as he spoke, two other explosions occurred almost simultaneously ; and then the whole party issued forth to view the result. Jack, though the most eager, held back the longest.

"By thunder, Minot!" he heard Clarke exclaim, "here is something, sure enough! Wait till the mud clears away. Well—darn my skin!"

Jack pressed forward, feeling himself hot and tremulous. The other men were bending down and staring into the bed of the brook, with various expressions of curiosity and interest. The blast had completely dispersed the boulder, fragments of which were lying confusedly about. The pool which had been formed above it had, of course, subsided, and the water ran only a few inches in depth. There, upon the rocky bottom, lay extended the bare skeleton and grinning skull of what had once been a human being. Some of the bones were crushed, and all were slimy and brown with a downy growth of water-moss. Some shreds of what had perhaps been clothing were loosened by the current, and floated away. There it lay, motionless, yet seeming to quiver and shake by reason of the eddying of the water above it. It was an uncanny spectacle.

"He's been there a good spell, and no one the wiser," observed one of the men.

"He wasn't no boy," said Clarke. "Look at the length of him. And there's four or five teeth gone in his jaw, too. Who can he have been, I'd like to know!"

"What's that thing between his ribs there?" said Minot.

Jack thrust his hand into the water, and took the thing out. It had lain where the man's heart had formerly been ; but it was formed of an even tougher and more impenetrable substance. As far as could be seen, it

was an oblong box of some metal not subject to corrosion. It was fastened by a clasp, on which were deeply engraved the initials M.V.

"I have seen this box before," he said. "It belonged to a man named Murdoch Vivian. There are his initials. He was a relative of mine, and he disappeared about nine years ago."

"Murdoch Vivian! do tell!" exclaimed Minot. "Why, that's the chap old Mossy Jakes has been carryin' on about all this while. Said he stole his papers. Maybe they're in that box."

"Then the box must be taken to him, and he must open it," Jack said. "Mr. Clarke, if you and Minot will come with me, I'll take it to him. I have come from England on purpose to see him. And if the papers you speak of are in this box, they probably are the ones that I came to speak to him about."

"And what might your name be, sir, if you please?" demanded Clarke, with a keen look.

"My name is John Vivian," answered he, in a firm voice, that all could hear. "And Murdoch Vivian was my father's brother."

"Well, I read a thing that was called a novel, once," observed Minot, in a meditative voice ; "but darned if this don't beat it all hollow!"

The conversation went on for some time. Jack listened and spoke with a quietness and self-possession that might have astonished himself, if he had been at leisure to criticise his own conduct. But that conduct was so purely superficial, and at so immeasurable a distance from the movement of his really vital thoughts and feelings, as to be practically in another sphere of existence. Somewhere in the hidden recesses of his soul, he was hearing a voice, with an unpleasant ring in it, say, "—Do you wait here, while I climb up and see—" and then a deafening burst of sound, followed by a more terrible silence ; and by an awful doubt, that had lasted nigh ten years ; but which was

at rest for ever now! He might be John, fourteenth Baron Castlemere, now; but on the name, and on the lands and the wealth that went with it, would rest henceforth the indelible stain of his uncle's blood. No one save himself would see it or suspect it; but there it would remain, with whatever curse it might bring with it.

Events succeeded one another in an effortless, mechanical fashion; he seemed to have known it all before. His inward pre-occupation prevented his feeling or expressing any outward surprise or emotion; and yet he was brought face to face with things which, at another time, would deeply have moved him. He came to the little red house beneath the elm, which seemed much smaller than when he had known it before; and he stood in the low-ceiled bedroom up stairs—the room in which he had been born. There lay a withered and shrunken old man, sharp-featured, with thin white hair and strange peering black eyes, deeply sunken in their sockets; and bony, fumbling hands, that moved restlessly and plucked at the coverlet. Many things were asked and answered; things of the utmost importance, no doubt; but to Jack they were like a drama that he himself had composed, and the end of which he knew. It was all strange enough, of course; but with an unreal strangeness, like that of a tale which one holds in one's hand, knowing that the entanglement is explained and finished on the last page. He was telling the story of his life since he disappeared from Suncook; he was identifying himself, or being identified, by this or that link in the chain of evidence; the lawyer was writing it down, pausing now and then with the pen suspended over the paper; the black-eyed old man, dying, yet intensely alive, was listening, interpolating, complaining, triumphing. Was it a play, or a dream, or a reality? There was reality somewhere—of that he was certain; but this laborious routine, where

everything must follow on in due order and succession, instead of being simultaneously present to consciousness—this, surely, was but the merest phantom or symbol of reality. The end was already there—had always been there; why go this weary way about to reach it. John, Baron Castlemere: there was a fact, plain and palpable enough, one would think! Well, at last the end would be reached; and at last it was reached. "You are he who was known as Jack; the son of Annette and Floyd Vivian, born in lawful wedlock; you are John, Baron Castlemere, heir to such and such estates. These are the attesting documents, strangely preserved through all these years by him who purposed to destroy them. This is your grandfather, who brought you up, who loved and hated you, whom you knew familiarly, yet never knew. This is—" This is your right hand, and this is your left hand! What need of more words? And now you must bid farewell—an eternal farewell—to this same grandfather, who has lived only to see this hour, and who now dies in such peace and comfort as he may. Follow him to the grave beside his long-buried daughter, on the slope against the sea. Wear mourning, and be solemn, for Time is stage-manager of this terrestrial theatre, and gives us cues when we must weep or laugh. And oh, how palpable and visible our masks and our stage-dresses are, and how inscrutable and unattainable are ourselves who are thus masked and costumed! What is the use and significance of this hackneyed procession, whereof one end is called youth, and the other age? And who, since the beginning of the world, has ever spoken a true word to his fellow, and revealed the secret of his heart and the thought of his soul? What audience, with what scorn or pity, beholds our mummeries and listens to our chatter of parrots and monkeys? Is Luck our God? and how shall He be worshipped?

CHAPTER XXXIV.

IN WHICH SIR STANHOPE MAURICE MAKES TWO OFFERS ; ONE OF WHICH IS REFUSED, AND THE OTHER IS ACCEPTED.

SIR STANHOPE MAURICE had certainly a claim to the title of a man who has had losses. He was a methodical and a resolute personage, born with a healthy conviction of his own good judgment and rectitude, and deficient only in this—that he never originated an idea, and always (though quite unconsciously) took his initiative in thought or action from some one else. But when he had committed himself to any view, or line of conduct, he would stick to it with a rare inflexible determination, which (since nothing of human devising is infallible) was likelier to lead to discomfiture than a more plastic frame of mind would have been. Sir Stanhope, at all events, was fated to suffer discomfiture oftener than was consistent with his notions of Providential impartiality. It was difficult for him to believe that he had been wrong, but the idea that he had been wronged more easily commended itself to him. What has been termed by some philosophers the natural cussedness of things, formed, as his misfortunes multiplied, an ever-strengthening element in his view of the world. He was not kindly disposed towards trouble; conscious of his own honest merit and moral orthodoxy, he was adverse from admitting that he was obnoxious to chastisement. But the persistence of undeserved calamity produces philosophic bewilderment; and by degrees Stanhope found himself reproachfully mistrusting those anchors of faith and hope on which he had been taught implicitly to depend. He was hovering anxiously upon the verge of the quaint conviction that a Providence which allowed the just to suffer without compensation, could not be a just Providence. His moroseness was aug-

mented by the operation of a sullen pride, which forbade him to invite the commiseration or assistance of his fellow-men. The mining craze with which the jocund eloquence of Sinclair had inspired him had swallowed up all his ready money, most of his investments, and not a little of his hereditary possessions; but it had not visibly shaken his determination to believe that the enterprise was a wise one, and that Sinclair and he had consequently been wise in respectively advocating and prosecuting it. A little more capital would set all right; but where was it to come from? There were friends who might have advanced a loan; but to have asked for it would have implied an admission of error or miscalculation, which was inadmissible. For some people it is easier to die of a mistake than to acknowledge it. Stanhope, accordingly, who in the days of his prosperity had looked forward to a union with Madeleine as among the blessed certainties of his career, found himself parted from her by adversity—not that he loved her less, but that he feared lest his motives in courting her should be misinterpreted. With a sense of gloomy dignity he told himself that he would rather starve than be under obligations to his wife for bread; and it afforded him a certain sombre satisfaction to meet the contrary persuasions of Kate Roland with an unreasoning refusal. He made arrangements to leave England—having first established his mother in a secure and comfortable position; and such was his predicament at the time of the Mayfair masquerade.

But there circumstances worked in him an important and unexpected change. Madeleine's intimation that his absence would be unwelcome to her, combined with the discovery that Sinclair had been playing a double game with him in respect of his relations to her, threw a new light upon the situation. If Sinclair had deceived him here—if, under cover of aiding

and abetting his suit to Madeleine, he had really been making love to her himself—why might not the same Sinclair have deceived him likewise with regard to the mines? But in that case, Stanhope's self-respect was no longer involved in affirming the respectability of the mines; he might openly abandon them; and again, the fact that a rival had been tampering with his mistress was in the way of being an obligation upon her true lover to avouch his love. To give a woman up from a superfine sense of delicacy is one thing; to surrender her to the unauthorised clutches of another man, is something altogether different; and Stanhope, as we have seen, lost no time in deciding that he would not take the latter course. It was true that her encouragement of him had not been very pronounced; but more was hardly to be expected at this stage. Stanhope's antipodean schemes retired promptly into the background; and he prepared to do what he should have been doing anytime during the last twelvemonth, if he had not been an ass.

It was with a feeling of lofty recklessness, tempered by an ample share of genuine lover's fervour and humility, that he presented himself before Madeleine, soon after his parting with her at the masquerade. The young lady had been expecting him, and had, perhaps, had her own notions as to the probable result of the interview; but, as often happens with youthful heroines, she had been dwelling too much upon what she herself was going to say and think, to leave other than a colourless and echo-like rôle to her interlocutor. The oldest and wisest of us, however, never fully succeed in forecasting the disturbance which an actual human being is sure to make in our neat, self-possessed, and artistically conducted dialogues of the imagination.

Stanhope, for example, after taking in his own the hand of Madeleine, who looked darkly pale in a feathery white dress, began by saying—

"Whom do you think I met just now in Bond Street?"

The question drove out of Madeleine's head the opening passages of the interview as she had planned it, and she was impelled to say, quite prosaically—

"Who?"

"Sinclair," replied Stanhope, turning to deposit his hat and cane on the sofa, and then facing her with a solemn expression. "He addressed me, but I took no notice of him."

"How—strange!" she ejaculated. She had "absurd" on the tip of her tongue; and, indeed, inwardly smiled at the idea of a man like Stanhope ignoring a man like Sinclair. It was somewhat as if a match-box were to cut a man-o'-war. So great was her estimate of the red-bearded freebooter, though she raged against him now.

"It was a terrible step to take," continued Stanhope, who was apt to use impressive adjectives. "But he has betrayed my confidence, and I can never accept his hand again. No man ever had a truer friend than Bryan—than Sinclair had in me; and this is the end of it! He has led me to throw away my property; and he was trying to rob me of my—I mean of your—"

"Won't you sit down?" said Madeleine. She leaned her cheek on her closed hand, and added—

"He only used me as I deserved."

"No, no," Stanhope exclaimed. "He deceived you, and every one else."

"I deceived myself in supposing that he could really care for me."

"He cares for nothing but himself."

"That is all any one cares for."

"Not I," said Stanhope, reddening.

"I believe still that he did care for me," resumed Madeleine, stultifying herself. "You cannot comprehend a man like him. He is not like others. And there is some mystery."

"A mystery about what?"

"I was going to tell you all I know;

you may know things about him that I do not, that may help to explain. We—he spoke to me long ago; even long before he went to America. No, you needn't abuse him; I kept it secret as much as he did, and deceived everybody just as much. If he was wicked, so was I."

"You didn't make people believe that you loved any one else," broke out Stanhope; "but one of the last things that he said to me before going away was that—"

"He did not tell you that he loved any other woman?" said Madeleine, lifting her head menacingly.

"He said what amounted to the same thing—that he hoped I would marry you immediately. He made me believe that he was taking my part with you."

"I can forgive him for that—that's a very different thing," rejoined she, leaning back again with a momentary smile. "It was necessary that no one should suspect."

"I see no such necessity. Why shouldn't he have declared himself openly?"

"We thought it was best not. He was poor, and people would have said he was a fortune hunter; and we should have been kept apart, and troubled."

"Well, it's no wonder he was afraid of being called a fortune-hunter."

"I hope you will not be so foolish as to call him one. If he was a fortune-hunter then, why isn't he one now?"

"I don't understand you. You say you have found out that he has been deceiving you; but I don't suppose he meant that you should find it out?"

"He could not have spoken otherwise if he had meant it."

"Why, you don't mean to say that he——"

"Jilted me? Yes, that is exactly what I mean," said Madeleine, smiling again. "Of course there's no reason why I should not be jilted, as well as

any other girl. But there is some mystery about this. When he went away he promised to be back within a year; and he kept his promise. But it was understood—at least I thought so—that after that there was to be no more concealment. Our engagement was to be made known. So he called here, and Kate was in the room; I would not let her go out. I expected that he would say, before her and before everybody, that he loved me, and that I was to be his wife. But he didn't, and then I was angry and indignant, and I would have nothing to say to him. And I wouldn't see him alone when he came afterwards; I was determined he should never have me unless he claimed me openly; because I shall soon be my own mistress now, and he has made money of his own—enough to justify him in asking for me. But he seemed to want to speak to me privately, and to go on as we did before; he asked if I were not going to the masquerade; and I had intended to go, but then I said I would not. However, at the very last I made up my mind that I would go, though neither he nor Kate should know it. So I dressed at my aunt's, and went. But Kate found it out, and came after me; and he mistook her for me, and proposed to be secretly married. So far there is no mystery. But when Kate told me what he had said, and that she made him believe I refused him, I was angry with her for coming between us; and then I went to him and told him the mistake he had made, and I told him why I had behaved so coldly to him; and I humbled myself before him, and said—I said everything that a woman can say to the man she loves."

Here Madeleine turned aside, and rested her arms upon the table beside her, and hid her face upon them. She had spoken quietly, and even indifferently, until the last sentences, when she suddenly faltered and broke down. There is no pity like self-pity.

As for Stanhope, he began to enter-

tain a misgiving that Bryan, as a rival, was not altogether disposed of yet. He loved Madeleine more ardently, but less hopefully than ever heretofore. His anxiety to know the upshot of her story, however, was too pressing to endure delay.

"How did he answer you?" he demanded.

Madeleine did not reply for at least a minute. At last she raised her head, looked at Stanhope with heavy eyes, and said—

"He made no answer that I expected. It was not a quarter of an hour since he had proposed that thing to Kate, thinking she was I."

"I can't see through that; the man must be crazy!" exclaimed Stanhope, knitting his brows. "Unless he thought that you and Kate were in league to mislead him?"

Madeleine merely shook her head; she had reason, perhaps, for knowing the groundlessness of this suggestion. Hereupon ensued a depressing and unquiet pause. Then Stanhope, who had not called upon Madeleine for the purpose of discussing his rival's eccentricities, felt that the time had come when he must strike in his own cause, if ever he were going to do so. As he fixed his eyes upon her with this thought in his mind, the profound sadness of her face and attitude struck him with something akin to dismay. Had he or any man so much power to do her good, as this false friend and heartless lover had had to do her harm? When he considered his own love for her in its relation to the energies of heart and mind with which nature had endowed him, it seemed immense and irresistible; but when he reflected on the feat it must perform in making this heartsore girl, forget an unworthy passion and embrace an honest one, it assumed a much less efficient aspect. So much easier is it to shatter the golden bowl than to repair it!

He got up from his chair, went over and stood beside her, and said—

"Madeleine, can you bear to let me love you?"

She glanced at him with a certain wistfulness. His appeal had been well made; but as she contemplated the compact, grave figure of the honourable little baronet, she sighed at not finding him more heroic. She would, perhaps, have been glad to yield, could she have felt the attack of a champion strong enough to conquer her; but to be obliged to be herself that champion—to help her lover to woo her fiercely enough to make her surrender herself to his desire—this was requiring too much.

"You are very different from him," she at length remarked, not quite regretfully, but as if recognising an important and hitherto unconsidered fact.

"There is only one way in which I could wish to be like him," was Stanhope's reply, in a tone which meant, "Let me be like him in winning your love, and I am content to be unlike him in deserving it."

"It's not your being like him that would help me to care for you," said Madeleine; "if I could ever care for any one, it would be for some one as different from him as day from night. But then the difference must be of the right kind!"

"I don't know what—what is in your mind," said poor Stanhope.

Now, oddly enough, Madeleine's mind was at that moment occupied with the vision of a tall, gallant-looking figure, with a broad white forehead, and dreamy, yet penetrating brown eyes; a figure in the garb of a troubadour, and in all respects such as might have stepped out of the pages of mediæval romance. This vision was undoubtedly very unlike Sinclair, and as little resembled Stanhope. How it happened to present itself before Madeleine's mental eyesight at this juncture, and with what favour or disfavour she regarded it, she did not declare; nor, indeed, did she make any direct allusion to it whatever. But presently she said—

"I'm afraid it would be no use, Stanhope. I might marry you, but I can't think of myself as your wife. A woman, you see, cannot be made a wife by just marrying her! If I were to marry you, it would be only to make Bryan think that I had forgotten him."

"You are too young to say you never can love again."

"I did not say that," returned Madeleine; and once more the mediæval vision passed before her. "I might love some one else, perhaps, sometime—"

"Well then—" began the wooper ; but Madeleine went on—

"It would not be you. I don't know why, Stanhope ; but it is so. If I could do it, of course I would ; I see that it would be sensible and safe ; and I would do almost anything not to have him think that he can break my heart. But a woman can love a man only in two ways—either as I loved Bryan, or—in some other very different way that I can't describe. If I loved you, it would have to be in the same way that I loved Bryan, and that's impossible. I like you too much ; and—I suppose I know you too well!"

This explanation was for the most part a riddle to Stanhope ; but Madeleine's demeanour, with its fatal calm and kindness, was only too easy to understand. She could discourse upon the subject most vital to his happiness as composedly as if it were a question of matching knitting-yarns. She was languid ; the subject hardly interested her.

"I am very unlucky!" said he. He was not accustomed to express despair and passion, but he did not on that account the less feel those emotions ; and his tone evidenced something of what his words did not convey. It stirred Madeleine's compassion, if not her remorse.

"If I had made the world," she said, "I would have made love always come on both sides, when it came at

all. If I had known the other night how hopeless this was, I would not have said to you what I did—I wouldn't have asked you not to go to America. But after all, I am very lonely now ; I seem to have nothing left."

"Can't I even do anything for you, Madeleine?" demanded Stanhope, with an impulse of manly generosity that was worth a great deal of love-making. "Is there nothing you wish that I might help you to? I should be glad if I could be of some use!"

She looked away, chafing one hand over the other upon her knee, and did not immediately reply. But her bosom heaved ; some thought was working in her.

"You would not hesitate to tell me?" Stanhope persisted.

"You are tempting me to ask you something I ought not!" she finally said.

"Let me judge of that."

She rose up, with her hands twisted tightly together, and her eyes large and bright.

"It's only my curiosity, I suppose," she said in an uncertain voice. "I cannot be satisfied till I know. There must be some reason for it. Men do not act so for nothing."

"What have I done?"

"I mean—Bryan Sinclair."

"Oh—Bryan! We have both of us done with him."

"It may not be so bad as it seems!" rejoined she, facing him with a gesture of restrained passion. "If I could only know! How can he have changed so suddenly—all in a minute? If you had known how he—what we were to each other, you would say it was impossible. I could bear any certainty better than a doubt! Nothing wastes life so much as that!"

"It is better not to know some things too well," replied Stanhope gravely. "If you knew what it was that made him false to you, it might appear worse than it does now."

"No, no, Stanhope! If I were certain that he was absolutely worthless, of course I should—I might forget him at once, and never think of him any more. But now, I shall always be wondering whether, perhaps—I might not have been somehow in the wrong—too hasty; it is so easy to have misunderstandings when there is so much love!"

"If you have any reason to think that you have been mistaken—" began Stanhope, much disturbed; "if this was only a quarrel between you—"

"No, no! I have told you all there was—all that I know or can imagine. But I cannot help the thought that he may be keeping something back—or that somebody may have told him something about me that is not true. I suppose I have enemies; every one must have!"

"Then you hope to be reconciled with him again?"

"No, I don't hope that—at least I don't expect it. I only want to be sure—that that could never be. Stanhope, I know I have no right to ask you to help me; but whom have I in the world? What can I do?"

"I will help you all I can, Madeleine—you needn't doubt that. Only let me know exactly what you wish to be done." Stanhope said this with an air of manly self-possession that was not without its effect upon the girl, who was now almost beyond her own control; and he added, with a touch of egotism that was not ignoble. "You may trust to me as a gentleman, though you can't love me. And I would rather be a gentleman whom you could trust, than a scoundrel who had won your love."

If Madeleine had heard this sentiment uttered upon the stage, she would probably have appreciated it more than she was able to do now.

"It is because he may not be what you think that I want you to speak to him," she said appealingly. "You can find out the truth if you will. Oh! if you would, I would thank you with

all my heart, whatever the truth may be! I do trust you more than I trust anybody! Find out what is the matter! You don't know how wretched I am!"

"Don't feel so, Madeleine—don't be so excited. Do you wish him to know that I come from you?"

"Do you think that would be best? You must do as you think right. Perhaps you had better not let him know—at least, unless it turns out to have been a misunderstanding. Do you despise me, Stanhope? I despise myself!"

"I would not allow anyone else to say that of you," returned the baronet, grandly. "Well, I'll go to him, and do my best to—to make you lost to me. You shall see, at all events, that my love is unselfish. I can say, truly, Madeleine, that I hope it will turn out to have been a misunderstanding. I would rather lose you, knowing that Bryan was true and you happy, than possess you, and know that you were miserable and he false. Well, I will go now." He walked to the sofa and picked up his hat and stick; then returned, holding out his hand. "Good bye," he said, in a steady voice, though his eyes were glistening. "I will come back as soon as I've seen him, and tell you about it—or you shall hear from me at any rate."

"Come and tell me yourself, Stanhope, if there is no good news," she said, letting her hand stay in his, and looking steadfastly at him. "You are kinder and nobler than I believed possible. I said just now that I knew you too well; but it is not so, I didn't know you well enough."

"And if the news is good?"

Madeleine hesitated; her eyelids fell, colour mounted to her face. After a moment he let go her hand, and stepped back. As she still said nothing, nor looked up, he turned to the door and went out. Virtue is never so exclusively its own reward as when it is practised for the benefit of a rival. But Sir Stanhope Maurice

had done a man's part, and felt taller on leaving the house than when he had entered it.

CHAPTER XXXV.

IN WHICH THE RELATIONS OF A MASTER AND HIS VALET ARE DISCUSSED—AND IT IS SHOWN HOW THE LATTER'S ANTI- CIPATION OF THE FORMER'S WISHES MAY SOMETIMES BE OBJECTIONABLE.

THE evolutions and devices of a mind like that of Bryan Sinclair form a subject for analysis more curious, perhaps, than edifying. When all a man's aims in life centre in himself, he is debarred from any other than a merely material progress ; the higher order of his faculties does not expand ; at most the lower forms of acuteness and readiness are polished ; and we find him, as time goes on, either morally or intellectually stationary, or retrograding. He has a revolution upon his own axis, but no orbit, or a very contracted one. To get the better of one's fellows is a religion the severe simplicity of which would be disconcerted by spiritual advancement ; and the interest which a life founded upon that religion possesses, is due (after the first novelty is over) rather to its relations and collisions with other lives than to anything inherent in itself.

It is to be remembered, however, that no human being can attain to absolute and unexceptionable selfishness. Occasionally he will be inconsistent, and act with some regard to the interests and happiness of other people. Often, too, an act is selfish, or the reverse, not intrinsically, but according to the inscrutable quality of the mental attitude which prompted it. These reservations produce, in practice, that mixedness in human characters which must more or less vitiate any sweeping judgment or generalisation. No man is so bad, so good, or so indifferent as it would be convenient to the epigrammatist to assume. A Frankenstein may be manufactured all of one colour and

tendency ; but human beings, while they remain in this world, are of the chameleon's dish. Consistency must begin on the other side of the grave.

It was certainly Bryan's business to know what he was about ; and yet it may be doubted whether he saw his course clear after his interview with Jack on the night of the masquerade. There had been a time when he was strongly attracted by Madeleine. Beauty, genius, and passion, in a woman, are a magnet, if anything in nature is so ; and then, if more were needed, Madeleine was an heiress. So it was, at all events, that Bryan found it agreeable to make love to her ; and his suit prospered. There were moments during his courtship when, had the moment demanded it of him, he would have sacrificed himself for her ; when he was so vividly sensible of her maiden freshness and purity as to become noble and chivalrous, and to desire to remain so for her sake. But he had never, either in act or principle, been an ascetic ; and loose behaviour bears this punishment—that the memory of it intrudes at seasons which would otherwise be most sacred and pure, and soils and spoils their sanctity by the gross image of their parody. The frigid ghost of the past mistress drags the husband back to the assignation place, and bids him embrace his present wife there, or not at all. And there is room, between the tenderest meeting of wedded lips, for the whole dreary and foul abyss of incontinent years to yawn and give forth its paralysing exhalation. During the period of courtship these awkward spectres are not so insistent ; but their influence is nevertheless to coarsen and shorten love's exquisite interior dawn, when the beloved one seems to the lover like the fragrant angel whose feet are beautiful upon the mountain-tops. Such glorious hallucinations, which are more true than facts, are vouchsafed to sullied souls by glimpses only, or not at all. Bryan therefore, soon began to regard Made-

leine merely as a fine-looking girl, with a fine mind and a fine fortune ; and with that his sentiments ceased to be romantic and became practical. She was a splendid and lovely ornament for a man to wear, and solidly useful as well. But he had already lost the power to be made a saint by her.

Nevertheless his aim in life was to enjoy every phase of it, and he was acute enough to perceive that in losing his worship of Madeleine he was losing something which it would have been worth while to retain. In casting about how best he might yet keep it alive he bethought himself of a former scheme of his of visiting California, where, as he had persuaded himself, gold was to be found. Although "Out of sight out of mind" is a weighty proverb, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder" may sometimes be no less true a one, and Bryan determined to make experiment of it. He would thus be killing two or three birds with one stone ; for he would have the plunge into unknown regions which his roving instinct occasionally demanded ; he would stand the chance of filling his pockets with ready money, of which he was in need ; and he would return with a probably undiminished and possibly increased ardour of affection for the girl he intended to marry. Off he went, therefore, and the passion which was kindled at his parting gave him good hopes of finding it in a condition still more inflammable on his return. It was characteristic of him to feel gratified rather than distressed at Madeleine's anguish in being separated from him ; not that he wished, in a general way, to see her suffer, but that the relation of her suffering, in this instance, to himself, flattered his self-esteem. During his sojourn abroad he made a feint, as it were, of regularly thinking about Madeleine in a lover-like way ; but though he could manage the intellectual part of the business very well he could not blind himself to the fact that his longings and fond

reminiscences had but a small amount of cordial substance in them. The predicament was almost ludicrous ; he grinned occasionally at his own plight, but it also annoyed and even disgusted him. For constancy as a virtue he cared nothing, but for constancy as a means of keeping up a certain form of enjoyment he cared much. Moreover he was in the conscious possession of unusual strength of body, mind, and temper ; why then should his emotions and affections not be lasting ? To have the force of will to dismiss an undesirable passion was one thing, but to be unable, by force of will, to stick to a passion that was desirable was to admit a lamentable weakness. There is no pleasure to be got out of fickleness ; and the suspicion that he was fickle was therefore a humiliation to Bryan. However, he still hoped for the best, and after he and Jack became friends he sometimes spoke to the latter about Madeleine, though never giving her her right name or entering into any verifiable particulars. He fancied that he might thus vivify his feeling towards her. But he was aware of an empty ring in his praises and raptures ; he could not talk the love-language of Romeo and of Troilus ; he was more apt to fall into the Richard III. vein. When at last he landed in London he felt that his voyage round the earth had brought him no nearer to Madeleine. He had only contrived to prove that he could live without her.

It was still quite possible that the sight of her might revive him, but, because it was a possibility and not a certainty, he delayed a couple of weeks before hazarding it. He was then pleased rather than disconcerted at Kate's presence during the interview ; the check gave him something to contend against, and enabled him to figure to himself what protestations he would have made had he and Madeleine been alone. He went away feeling encouraged ; she surpassed his anticipations ; if he could only be held

back from her persistently enough his yearning for her might become satisfactorily intolerable. He was not troubled by her silence and seeming coldness ; it was plain enough that she loved him as much or more than ever, and was hurt at his own undemonstrativeness. In the course of the next few days he revolved a new scheme that promised well—that of a secret marriage. Bryan had perhaps read that it was a custom among the Circassians and other semi-civilised tribes to make a profound mystery of their wives, and to visit them only by stealth, like a thief in the night. This custom had a good deal of practical wisdom in it—it kept up the excitement so to say ; and the factitious and imaginary barriers wherewith the wife was surrounded served to endow her with a value independent of her personal attractions. To marry Madeleine surreptitiously, therefore, besides being a sound piece of policy on the financial side, would invest her with the romantic charm of a treasure unlawfully obtained ; and since, after the ceremony she would return to her home and remain in all appearance the same as ever, vista was opened of unlimited amusing intrigue, of alarms, of expedients, of perilous meetings, of subtle understandings. It was an ingenious and promising device, not unworthy of Bryan's fertile invention, By the time he had perfected it the masquerade was at hand.

Madeleine's pronounced and reiterated refusal to go to the masquerade had gone for nothing with Bryan ; he was so full of double meanings himself that he could not help suspecting the presence of some in Madeleine's mind. She wished to throw Kate off the scent, or to make him anxious, or some such matter. If he was not altogether right in his conclusions he was not (as we have seen) very far wrong. Madeleine did go to the masquerade, but she went in a disguise which she had some justification in believing would prove impenetrable. Bryan was on

the look-out, and when the necklace had revealed to him the person whom he supposed to be Madeleine, he lauded himself for his sagacity, and lost no time in making known his scheme. But the emphatic and scornful manner in which the wearer of the necklace refused his overtures completely surprised him and put him out of countenance. At a moment when there was no need for concealment here was Madeleine vehemently dismissing him and all his works, and informing him in the most unmistakable terms that she cared for him not the snap of her finger. The tables were turned ; and before he could recover from his bewilderment his interlocutor had slipped away from him and disappeared. It was while this discomfiture was still tingling in his ears that he encountered Jack, and heard from him the amazing story of his parentage.

It was not easy, even for a man like Bryan, to see his way clearly and at once through this zigzag of circumstances ; and he had not yet made up his mind how to act, when he was confronted by the true Madeleine, in a mood of mingled passion and agitation that made her peculiarly difficult to deal with. She reproached him for his past apathy and reticence ; but, in the same breath, she plainly insinuated that she would not have responded to his suggestion of a secret marriage in quite the manner that Kate Roland had done. How should he reply ? The situation of half an hour ago was altered now. The stimulating barriers were broken down ; not only that, but the worldly advantages of the step he had been on the point of taking were seriously in jeopardy, if not actually eliminated. Bryan did not really care for money and social position as a miser and a snob care for them, but he was alive to the taint of failure and absurdity which would attach to a man who should unite himself to a woman reputed to be an heiress, who turned out to be none. He was provoked with himself for having been

bamboozled, and was by no means in an accommodating humour. "What one says in a masquerade," he remarked in effect to Madeleine, "must not be taken too seriously." The sentiment was capable of bearing more than one meaning, but Madeleine, who had impetuously laid herself open to insult, was too sensitive not to understand it as levelled against herself. She shrank back at once, and so the interview ended.

Bryan, as soon as his spleen had relieved itself, began to reconsider his position more coolly. Madeleine must not be let slip thus. What if, after all, the disaster impending over her fortunes could be averted? Might not Jack be persuaded to give up his enterprise? or, if he proved obstinate, might he not be prevented? And then, how would Bryan look, if Madeleine, smarting under the slight she had received, were to turn to some one else—to Stanhope, for example—for consolation? This apprehension wrought yet another change in the man's purpose; Madeleine appeared once more desirable. Such are the vacillations which beset every resolve in which the heart is not primarily enlisted. He set himself to test the constancy of Jack's determination; and when he found himself foiled on that issue, his fiercer traits began to creep into visibility. Here, however, he might have paused, content to have contemplated the ugly plunge, without taking it, had he been left to himself. But there was a Caliban at hand, for whose existence Bryan was responsible, and who had already succeeded in establishing a strange sort of sway over him. Identifying himself wholly with his nominal master, Tom Berne constituted himself the latter's evil genius. But the relation between these two men is not to be described in a phrase. If anything in the phenomena of the communion of human beings deserves to be called hideous, it is surely such a thing as this. Tom Berne, up to the

moment when Bryan Sinclair first crossed his path, had been a resolute, capable, honest fellow, whose great physical strength sometimes tempted him to be over-bearing, but who was accounted a good and trustworthy chap in the main. Bryan met him, fought him, and beat him; and beat him in such a way as to break his spirit. Tom became, soul and body, his slave. At last, by Bryan's command, Tom killed a man who turned out to be his own brother. From that time, a change began to exist in their mutual attitude. Tom, whose character had become more and more debased after he had surrendered his moral responsibility, had nevertheless (let us suppose) solaced himself with the notion that the recording angel, in making up the indictment against him hereafter, would make allowance for the fact that the sins committed by him at Bryan's instigation were practically involuntary. But the killing of his brother, though as involuntary as any of the former acts, differed from them in being a final outrage upon whatever remained of Tom's human affections. It turned the man from a passive slave into an active devil. All thought or care about his future salvation vanished from his mind. His complete object in life was now Bryan's destruction. Not his physical destruction, however—or that only subordinately—but the eternal damnation of his soul. To compass this end he hit upon a device of singular ingenuity, and indicating the awakening in him of an intellectual cunning more subtle than any ordinary circumstances could have rendered him capable of. So subtle, indeed, and yet so simple was his procedure, that for a long time Bryan himself had no suspicion of the change, and never, perhaps, arrived at a full understanding of it. Superficially, all went on as before; Tom was still the unquestioning and complaisant slave, executing, without hesitation or reluctance, whatever unsavoury or unholy job Bryan deemed it beneath

his own dignity to have a hand in. But by degrees the master felt, rather than perceived, that his tool was becoming in some way more assimilated to himself than heretofore. Tom seemed to have so completely laid aside his individuality, to have so utterly made Bryan's will his own, that there was no longer any other than a physical or accidental distinction between them. Tom was a supplementary Bryan ; he was the manifestation of all Bryan's wickeder and baser characteristics. One soul informed them both ; but while in Bryan this soul still retained some elements that were at least intellectually good and noble, in Tom it was unmixed and sunless evil. Whatever life Tom had, he took from Bryan ; but it was moral death and corruption, not life, that he gave in return. The physical parallel of the situation would be that of a festering limb, which draws its vital nourishment from the body, and insinuates in return its own poison into the whole system. And there is another step in the analogy. After the mortification of the limb has set in, it begins to develop a horrible life of its own—the life which announces annihilation. In the same way, Tom, his moral rotteness being established, began to manifest a loathsome and fatal kind of vitality. Slowly, but surely, he ceased merely to discharge the evil offices with which he was commissioned, and assumed the attitude of a suggestor and advocate of sin. In deadly hatred, as in immeasurable love, an obscure bond of sympathy seems to unite the hating or loving hearts ; and it appeared as if Tom were immediately made aware of the presence of any the most minute germ of wicked intent in Bryan's mind, and straightway set himself to cherish and encourage it. Had he also planted it ? Bryan sometimes suspected so ; but there was never any direct evidence to that effect. Certain it was, however, that Bryan became daily more prone to evil impulses, and that

Tom's alacrity in bringing these impulses to realization was every day more marked and less liable to restraint. This would have mattered little had Bryan been able to free himself from the persuasion that he, quite as much as Tom, was guilty of whatever Tom did. When a man is moved to commit a murder, he has the option of resisting the temptation or of yielding to it ; but for Bryan this option no longer existed ; no sooner did the temptation enter into his own heart, than he saw the reflection of it in Tom's eyes, and felt assured that sooner or later he—through Tom's agency—would commit it. Thus had his deliberate maltreatment of another man's soul resulted in the loss of his own moral free-will. Between thinking and doing evil there was for him no more than a nominal distinction ; and evil thoughts were fast gaining the ascendancy over all others. It was no figure of speech, therefore, to say that he was now the slave and Tom the master.

What was to be done ? The most obvious thing was to sever his connection with Tom at once. But we have already seen how this expedient was defeated. Tom, with a hideous parody of affection, declared his inability to exist apart from his adored master. Wages were no object—hard treatment was no deterrent ; where Bryan was, Tom must be, until the end. Until the end ? Then why not hasten the end ? Why not take the wretch by the throat and strangle the life out of him on the spot ? Alas ! the deed were easy, but the relief would be delusive. Tom would be only too happy to have Bryan murder him. But Bryan knew that in murdering him he would inflict the final defeat and humiliation upon himself ; and much as he had lost, he was not yet so desperate as to do that. No other escape was practicable ; so there was nothing to do but endure.

We need not enter into the details

of the plot by which it was intended that Jack should be prevented from obstructing Madeleine's inheritance. Its accidental miscarriage afforded a perverse sort of triumph to Bryan, while it filled Tom with malignant disappointment. This faithful and devoted agent had risked the gravest personal consequences in order to do his beloved master so signal a service. He had considered all the bearings of the deed, and had decided that it was worth risking hanging for ; merely to be knocked senseless in the attainment of such an object would be a positive privilege. But the stars in their courses fought against him, and he had his aching bones for his pains. The situation as regarded Bryan and Madeleine thus remained unaltered ; and it was necessary to contrive some other device ; for Bryan would not consent to give her up (even without her fortune) so long as anything beside his own good pleasure stood in the way of his possessing her. But the position of affairs demanded patience and caution. It was still possible, in the first place, that Jack's anticipations might come to nought. Until that point was settled one way or the other, especial care must be taken to do nothing that could in any way compromise Madeleine. To marry her out of hand (assuming her to be amenable to such a course), would be equally imprudent. But neither would it be safe to leave her without an explanation of his conduct during the interval which must elapse before the trial—if there was a trial—took place. What, then, should the explanation be, and how should it be offered ? After his blunder with Kate, not to mention his rencontre with Madeleine herself, he could hardly expect to be received as usual at the house. It would be necessary to find some other place of meeting, and, what was more difficult, to induce Madeleine to meet him there. Having accomplished that, he must rely upon the charms of his eloquent tongue, the fertility of his

resources, and the assumption that Madeleine's love for him was stronger than her mistrust or her pride, to help him out of his difficulty.

One evening, when, having meditated deeply upon these things, he was about entering his brougham to seek distraction at the opera, he heard his name spoken, and looking round, saw Stanhope Maurice coming hastily towards him along the pavement. He took his foot from the step, and waited, with the handle of the door in his hand.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SUGGESTIVE OF THE UNWISDOM OF SELF-SACRIFICE ; THE PERSON FOR WHOM THE SACRIFICE IS MADE, NOT BEING, AS A GENERAL THING, APT TO BE IMPROVED THEREBY EITHER MORALLY OR MATERIALLY.

BRYAN had not forgotten how Stanhope had "cut" him at their last casual meeting ; but, occupied with more important matters, the incident had not much impressed him. He had always been accustomed to treat the baronet with a certain blunt good humour, but had never felt much respect for his brains ; like Iago, he had "made his fool his purse" upon occasion ; but now that the occasion was no longer present, he did not particularly care whether Stanhope quarrelled with him or not. He hoped no good, and feared no harm from him. As the latter came up, he said—

" Well, what's the matter now ? "

" I am the bearer of an important and delicate message," said Stanhope, with a sort of agitated formality. " I need scarcely assure you, Mr. Sinclair, it is not for my own pleasure, after having declined intercourse with you, that I now——"

" Pshaw, man ! leave your damnable faces and begin !" exclaimed Bryan with a short laugh. " It would take a sharper cut than yours to draw my blood. Speak up ! "

"This is about—about Miss Vivian," said the baronet, dropping his voice.

"What? the old lady?"

"You know to whom I refer. You never told me you had intentions—"

"Now you mention it, I don't believe I ever did. Well?"

"But you did think—"

"Bless you, man! if I told you all I think, where would you find room in your head to put the information?"

"I cannot say what I wish to here," remarked Stanhope, growing red.

"Hop into my brougham, then, and let's have it as we go along." They entered the vehicle accordingly, and it set off. "Now then!" said Bryan.

"I was at the masquerade the other night," Stanhope began. "I know—she has told me—what took place there. You mistook some one for her, and—"

"Oh! sits the wind in that quarter? Are you her ambassador?" Stanhope did not immediately answer. "Or her accepted lover—is that it?" continued Bryan, looking at him.

"My arrangements are made to go abroad next month," replied Stanhope, with solemn reserve.

"Ah! Hum! I see! Poor boy! So we're both in the same box, eh?"

"I did not come to talk about myself," Stanhope said.

Bryan rapidly reflected. It was evident that Stanhope had something to communicate, and it would be no use continuing to snub him until he had found out what it was. Possibly the communication might be pertinent to Bryan's present embarrassment. Such a messenger should be conciliated and encouraged. Bryan therefore discharged his tone of its brusque and mocking accent, and said, quietly—

"Listen to me, Stanhope—we've known each other all our lives. A woman has come between us; that's the curse of all friendships. I deceived you—I own it. But a man of the world like you can make allowances.

A man may be driven to do a thing he regrets, to avoid doing a thing he would regret still more. In love and war, you know—eh!"

"I know I would rather be caught in some villainy myself, than catch you in it!" exclaimed Stanhope, impulsively. "I have always quoted you as the finest fellow I knew. You know what confidence I always put in you. I never doubted you because my affairs went wrong. I'd lose all the money over again to be certain you are an honest man. But I did think, after all you let me say to you about my feeling for Madeleine—"

"Yes—yes—you have some claim to know my motives, and perhaps you may sometime— But first—what is all this about?"

"I want you to understand, in the first place, that I love her with all my heart and soul. It's a sacred thing, and, whatever you may think of me, it deserves respect. If you don't care for her as much as I do, Sinclair—if you have any thought of playing her false—in God's name say so now! Only a devil incarnate would see a girl like her shamed because she—she—had given away her heart. By Jove!"

Bryan perceived from his companion's manner that he must have offered himself to Madeleine and been refused. This put him at his ease. He spread out his hands with an ingenuous gesture. "Do I look like a devil incarnate?" he inquired.

"Well, you best know what you are. I have known her ever since she was a child—a little black-eyed creature, with all sorts of queer little fantastic ways. I fancied I could have her at any time; I never thought any other man would come between us. But I'd given up the hope of making her my wife yet—until I'd done something to improve my prospects. And all the time she was—Good God! Bryan, how could you have the heart to let me expose myself before you so? You two may have been making fun of me. No! I can't

think that ; she is too noble to do such a thing ! But it wasn't fair of you. If you had told me, in the beginning, that it was you she cared for, there's no man I would so gladly have seen her happy with. By Jove, you might have told me ! ”

“ By Jove, so I might ! ” returned Bryan, thrusting his hands in his pockets. “ But the fact is, I was down on my luck. The only safe thing seemed to be, to keep dark. As for your talking to me about her, how could I prevent that ? However, since I got back from America, I'm bound to confess I have fared no better than you. We're not on terms, it appears.”

“ But she says she spoke to you after you had spoken to Mrs. Roland at the masquerade.”

“ But not before Mrs. Roland knew what I had meant to tell Madeleine.”

“ What difference did that make ? ”

“ All the difference in the world. I had my plans laid, wise or foolish is no matter now. Since Mrs. Roland had found them out, there was an end of them. There could be no secret marriage after that—eh ? ”

“ But you gave Madeleine to understand that you had not been in earnest from the first.”

This was, in truth, the nucleus of the difficulty. Unless Bryan could excogitate some plausible explanation for his sudden change of front towards Madeleine, he could hardly expect her to forgive him. He considered for a moment. Then he looked up.

“ Does Madeleine actually suppose that between the time of my leaving Kate Roland and meeting her, I had changed my mind about her ? ”

“ She could suppose nothing else, if she trusted her ears. But she is all truth and purity herself, and she wishes to believe, if she can, that you are as honest as she. Rather than risk a misunderstanding, she sacrifices her pride, and gives you this chance to set yourself right. And if you take unfair advantage of her position, by Heaven you deserve to be shot ! ”

“ Isn't it rather odd that a girl should ask her rejected suitor to be the medium of reconciliation between her and the rival ? ” Bryan inquired demurely.

Stanhope answered nobly, “ She knew I cared more for her than for myself, so she honoured me with her confidence. And if I'm worthy her trust, I'm worthy yours, if you were the best man that ever lived on the earth ! ”

“ You do love her, Stanhope, and no mistake ! and I believe you'd make her a better husband than I, ” said Bryan, leaning back in his seat. “ However, Fate will have its way ! As to this question, it was not I that changed, but the circumstances.”

“ How do you mean that ? ”

“ It's simple enough. But here we are at the theatre ; come in—there's room for two in my box.”

They alighted, and Stanhope followed Bryan into the house. The opera was *Don Juan*; the curtain had not yet risen. Bryan removed his hat and overcoat, and appeared in evening dress. Stanhope, not being thus arrayed, remained in the background.

“ The thing lies in a nutshell, ” Bryan continued. “ I go to the masquerade with a certain end in view. An accident upsets my calculations. Having betrayed my secret to Kate Roland, could I repeat to Madeleine what I had just said to her ? Would you have done so in my place ? My only wish was to spare her annoyance—to save her from being compromised. The best way seemed to be to treat the whole affair as a jest—to pretend that I had known it was Kate all along, and had proposed the secret marriage only as a bit of fun. I could see that she felt hurt for the moment; but better that than have outsiders suppose I had intended any surreptitious action. I hoped to have an opportunity for private explanation afterwards, but she has allowed me none. I have not had an easy hour since. You know as well as I do that

the girl can't take care of herself—one must do it for her. Her happiness and welfare are all that I think of."

"Well," said Stanhope with a sigh, "I must admit that you have met the objections fairly. I will let her know what has passed between us."

The orchestra had entered upon the last movement of the overture. Bryan happened to glance across the house while Stanhope was speaking, and saw two ladies enter a box opposite; he recognised them immediately. The tallest of them seated herself in the front of the box, and leaned upon its cushioned edge; her eyes wandered over the audience, and finally lighted upon Bryan, who immediately rose. She drew back.

Bryan turned to Stanhope. "Give me your hand, old friend!" he said, and held out his own. The baronet complied, with some surprise, for the other's tone was unexpectedly cordial. They stood thus in the front, in full view of the house.

"I shall take some better oppor-

tunity for speaking to you further on this matter," Bryan said. "You have acted like the fine fellow I always knew you to be. I see you want to be off now; but don't let it be long before I hear from you!"

Poor Stanhope departed without suspecting who had been the witness of this friendly passage; otherwise he might have been more heedful of his bearing; for though Bryan's words had all been reasonable, they had not put Stanhope entirely at his ease. Though they had hardly aroused his mistrust, they had not altogether satisfied his expectation. However, he hoped for the best.

When he had gone, Bryan again looked across the house. The overture was just concluding. The lady opposite was fanning herself fitfully. Their eyes met. Bryan left his box; and three minutes afterwards he was by Madeleine's side, and had felt the pressure of her hand. The other lady was Miss Vivian. The curtain went up, and the opera began.

To be continued.

LONDON PLAYGROUNDS.

WHEN a girl first leaves school she is apt to find the days long. There seems nothing particular for her to do, and she feels useless and in the way. Hitherto, her studies and school-work generally have taken up all her time and energies—filled up her life. Now a great change has come; she knows that there is a place and work for her, and she is longing for it, but she cannot find it. The girl's life is over, the woman's not begun, and for a time there is a blank. All around her, friends are busy, interested in one pursuit or another, artistic, literary, philanthropic. If she has a decided bent, the problem of how to use her life, and what her elderly relatives call her "superfluous activity," is comparatively easy; but if not, if she is just an ordinary, healthy, capable girl, ready for anything, but with no special inclinations, it is much more difficult. A boy in this position generally has a profession chosen for him, and has to train himself for it; a girl is left to find out for herself what she is fit for; and until she does, she is eager, restless, impatient, longing to do something, not knowing what. She tries various things, but is checked on every side; told she is too young for this, too inexperienced for that, and all the time she does not feel young at all, but decidedly old—nearly twenty perhaps—and as for experience, how is she to gain it if she is never to try anything? Must all her life be passed in waiting? She is advised to study, and she does; but study at school, with regular, fixed hours, and companions to spur one on, is a very different thing from study at home, alone, without any definite object, when one may be interrupted every moment. Besides, she has a growing

feeling that she ought to do something for others, she can no longer be bounded by personal or even family duties; when these are done, she has still a fund of energy unused which cannot be comfortably expended even on lawn tennis, and what to do with her spare time becomes an important question. She knows that there is a world outside and beyond her own home, and she feels that she owes some duties to it. She wishes to do something for others less fortunate than herself, who have no part nor lot in her life, yet whom she sees daily, with whom she has a vague yearning sympathy, and whom she has a great longing to help. Can she do nothing for these because she cannot be a Sister of Mercy or a nurse in an hospital? She would like at this stage to give up her whole life to the poor, but this is clearly impossible and wrong; older people tell her she must wait; "soon enough," they say, "will work come in such quantities that you will be thankful enough to have so much time to yourself as you have now. Wait." But meanwhile she is not thankful at all; so much leisure, unaccustomed as she is to it, and not knowing how to use it, wearies her; she chafes impatiently against the too great ease of her lot, and looks back longingly to her school-days, when she always had plenty to do, and work given her instead of having to look for it, and be told she must "Wait till she is older" when she thinks she has found it; till she almost wishes for gray hair, to prove that she is as old as she feels.

There is no help for it. She must wait for her life's work to come to her. She is unfit for it now; but by and by, at the right time, it will come, as

surely as to-morrow's sun will rise. Every one of us has some special work, and no one can rest, in the true sense, till he has found it, perhaps not in this world at all. But meanwhile, is our girl's spare time to be wasted? Surely that is no way of preparing for work to come. It certainly need not be, for there are many useful and necessary things which must be done by somebody; and earnest, over-worked people would be glad of the help of even untrained, if zealous and active, young people; but, for the most part, youth and want of training are great drawbacks. My object is to point out one work which does not need special training, and which young people, and only young people, can do.

We have heard, and are still hearing, a great deal about open spaces—breathing-places for our city, playgrounds for our children. Now, if any of you will go to a newly-opened playground, or will join an excursion of children from any poor and crowded part of the city, nay, if you will walk down one of the paved courts leading out of Drury Lane, for instance, you will see at once the kind of work that is wanted. The poor little creatures sit or stand listlessly about, idle and bewildered, not knowing what to do, not knowing how to play.

Play, you think, comes naturally to puppies, kittens, children, and all young things—yes, if they lead natural lives. But shut your kitten, for a week, up in a box, without much light or air, or even a cotton reel to roll about, and see how much it will play when it is at last set free.

So our children in many parts of London are shut up until the power of play is almost gone. Respectable parents, rightly and naturally, will not let their children run loose about the streets, where there are so many dangers, physical and moral. Their only chance is on the road to and from school, when they are told not to loiter, or on those rare occasions when mother has time to take them to the park, often so far from their homes

that they are too tired to run about when they reach it. And if they are allowed to be in the streets, what kind of play can they have there? It must consist chiefly of playing buttons at the corners, or rushing wildly along, to the great annoyance of older and staider fellow-creatures, until stopped by the police—and even in this game only the older and stronger children can indulge. To be sure, in any quiet street you may see groups of little children dancing to the music of the organ-man, and a very pretty sight it is; but for the most part a child's life is divided between school and home; and when home consists of one or two rooms, there is not much space for a *very* lung-stretching, limb-stretching, romp, even if the over-tired parents could bear the noise. No wonder the little ones grow prematurely old and wizened. Play is known to be indispensable for the children of well-to-do parents, and arrangements are made for it. In one form or another they have it all their lives; but these other children, who need it quite as much, have it by fits and starts as they can get it, often not in a good or healthy form. It is not considered a necessary for them, and no provision is made for it; rather their efforts at obtaining it are checked by a hasty "Sit still, can't you," from nervously irritable elders. Poor little Saturday's bairns, working hard for their living from the beginning! The consequence is, when they are turned loose in a playground, they do not know what to make of it. The rougher ones, who have not been kept out of the street, begin to enjoy themselves in their fashion, cuffing each other, shouting, and frightening the timid, well-behaved creatures who have never seen such doings except at a distance.

Now here is something for you to do, you who think yourselves old and grown up, who yet in your hearts enjoy a good run as much as ever you did. Go and teach those children, who have not had your advantages—a big garden, visits to

the country, plenty of room for brothers, sisters, cousins, and friends—how to play. Show them the games you like best. They will be ready enough to learn, especially if you begin with the more simple—such as “Mulberry-bush,” before going on to the complex. An old person, whose limbs are stiff, or who is weighted by care and responsibility, cannot do this; it must be done by one young enough to enjoy running about; for duty-play is a very poor affair. Play because you like it, or not at all. You remember, I daresay, that dreadful time when you were told, or found out for yourself, that you were too old for dolls; and how you consoled yourself by nursing and dressing somebody else’s. Well, you are too old to romp now, but not too old to like and need it, so you must play for other people’s amusement, instead of your own. It comes to pretty much the same thing in the end, as far as you are concerned. You get the exercise you need, and give them pleasure at the same time.

You think perhaps it may be disagreeable, that you will feel shy, unable to say anything to these children. Go and try; find out how responsive they are; how eagerly they put their confiding dirty little paws into yours, as the pleading little voices cry, “Is you goin’ to take us into the garding, miss?” even though the “garden” is nothing but a tiny railed-in space, with formal walks and prim, bare beds, where they may not tumble about for fear of kicking up the gravel, or trampling on the place where the flowers are not! It is such a relief to them to be taken out of the noise of the street into a breathing-place, that that alone is almost enough for them; and if you can add a story, or a song, or a quiet game, or a picture-book, their cup of happiness is full. In such hard lives as theirs, a very little kindness goes a long way. They are so accustomed to being “chivied” about by policemen, rough neighbours, and often, sad to say, by worried parents, that merely being let alone,

or spoken to as ordinary fellow-beings, is a rare and unaccustomed pleasure. This is an extreme case. Playgrounds generally are bare and ugly enough, but there is nothing to prevent the children’s running about as much as they please. They are of all shapes and sizes. Many are provided with swings and gymnastic apparatus, which give great delight. Many, such as the little, disused burial-ground in Drury Lane, are kept shut against the children, unless they are under the charge of some grown-up person; in all, the swings are never used unless there is some one responsible, to guard against accidents from carelessness or roughness. These children are just like others; a little more responsive perhaps, a little more dirty, a little less reserved in expressing their feelings, quite as ready to make friends as those who have been overwhelmed with attention from their birth. Having once made friends in play, you may, if you like and have time, go on to other things—teach them to sew, or draw, or anything else that you may think can help them and brighten their lives; but do not forget that the grand business of a playground is play, and, in a good sense, the more romping it is the better. Remember that “Play is the voluntary exercise of all our faculties under a sense of freedom; where we exert ourselves because we like, and not because we must, that power is developed by exercise—and exercise only.” It is, in fact, a branch of education that is very much neglected.

This work needs no special qualifications. She who undertakes it must be moderately good-tempered and just, for little neglected children are sometimes provoking, and she may be often called on to settle disputes; she must be strong enough to hold somebody’s baby for a minute while somebody has a swing, and if the minute should be rather long, she can reflect that nursing requires knack rather than strength, or how could that poor, pale little thing manage who has been standing

leaning against the wall this half-hour, with her baby in her arms—poor “little old-faced, peaking sister turned mother!” She must be ready with suggestions, on those unlucky days, when no one wants to do anything in particular, except to interfere disagreeably with every one else. She must be firm, and not allow herself to be coaxed or bullied. She must be able to run (this is very important), and should be able to sing, or at least croon, the “Peasant,” or the “Little Dog,” and must have a natural love of children. If she can really sing, not croon only, she will be able to give extra pleasure, and if she can tell stories, she will soon get an eager little audience, when, tired of running, she sits down for a moment on the seat, with which most playgrounds are provided. Stories should be told, not read. The stock, either of games or stories, need not be large; children like old favourites again and again. Few toys are needed; skipping-ropes and balls are the best, and these should be lent, not given. Gifts, unfortunately, almost always lead to jealous disputes, when they are rarities. Give the things you wish to the playground; allow them to be kept there, and lent when wanted—unless indeed you can call and make your presents, without a criticising audience crying, “Oh, miss, it is a shame, you give him a ball and me only a top; he sha’n’t have it,” &c.

Swings, if there are any, are an immense resource; then the play teacher’s chief work is to make the children take turns without squabbling. This is a little difficult at first, when everyone wants a swing and no one is quite sure that the swings won’t be taken

down before his turn comes; and, if possible, it is as well to take one or more friends, that one may watch the swings while the others amuse those who have had their turn, or will have a long time to wait for it.

Besides, it is well to take friends in any case—partly on the principle of “the more the merrier,” and partly because it is easier to keep order without a sense of constraint where there are plenty of grown-up people about.

Playground workers are particularly wanted on Saturday holidays. The play teacher need not forget her little friends when she leaves them to go into the country. They will be delighted to hear her adventures when she returns, and to look at her treasures of shells and seaweed. If she likes, she may borrow a basin and give them some idea of a rock-pool, which, though very unsatisfactory and poor to her, will fill them with delight.

There are many playgrounds in want of workers just now, and more would be opened if persons were willing to take children into them and superintend them. Perhaps some of you may know of some little place near your own homes—if not, there is room for play teachers in the little burial-ground in Drury Lane; in Wentworth Street, Whitechapel; in Baker’s Row Park, late the Quakers’ Burial Ground; in Aldgate and in Freshwater Place, near Edgware Road. The Kyre Society, at 14, Nottingham Place, W., could suggest others.

The School Board managers would open their large playgrounds on Saturday afternoons, if proper people would volunteer to superintend the children.

B. HOLLAND.

"ROMEO AND JULIET" AT THE LYCEUM.

Romeo and Juliet as presented at the Lyceum Theatre by the poet-manager of our time deserves a permanent literary record. Around the histrionic merits of the impersonations in it light clouds of controversy may gather. But these cannot obscure the essential and peculiar distinction of the representation. In toned brilliancy, in ingenious and proportioned completeness, in perfection of quiet and expressive real-life harmony, and in poetical elevation as resulting from these, it is a great advance upon all previous theatrical performances.

When a play is well mounted—when the various arts in alliance with that of acting are combined so successfully as to realise in some degree the scene as the author must have wished spectators to imagine it—there are always attempts to persuade the public that these aids are derogatory. Some even go so far as to say that the enjoyment of plays must have been most complete when a placard—"Bohemia" or "A Temple of Diana"—was all the assistance given through the eye to the mind by the arrangements of the stage. Others are content to insist upon a limitation to some certain degree of decoration, probably associated in their recollections with what they hold to be the palmy days of acting, and arbitrarily insist that anything beyond this not very definite limit of beauty and splendour dwarfs the acting and distracts the attention from what ought most to occupy it. This discussion seems scarcely worth pursuing, because there is no standard of judgment to appeal to. Every one must conclude for himself whether the mounting of

any play distresses him by excess, or reduces by distraction his capacity or his inclination to be affected by the acting. Mr. Irving has probably hit upon the common sense of the matter in the simple observation that the poet would have availed himself of the advantages of the fuller development of our present stage had his own opportunities been brought up to the level of our time. Great acting, great singing, noble soarings of poetry will make themselves felt on the stage, be sure, none the less for appropriate and fancy-kindling roundings.

One suppressed premiss in objections of the kind just referred to deserves to be brought up and discredited. It seems to be assumed that effects to increase the acting attractions of classical plays are modern inventions, and that the old usage was to produce them with great severity of style, if not in textual purity. Now not only were the acting versions of Shakespeare till the last generation grossly corrupted by mere stage play-wrights, but according to their lights the managers of the palmy days used to foist into Shakesperian representations, for the purpose of mere theatrical effect, episodes utterly incongruous with the structure and quality of the poet's fabric. Take, for instance, the regular acting version of *Romeo and Juliet*—from which the essential introductory Rosaline passages are struck out. Prefixed to it, under the dates of 1825 and 1831, are casts containing the names of Charles Kemble, Abbott, Wallack, Jones, Miss Kelly, Miss Phillips, Miss Fanny Kemble, and

other celebrated players. It contains, to say nothing of Garrick's long scene substituted for Shakespeare's language, the following nonsensical interpolated opening for the fifth act :—

ACT V.

SCENE I.—A CHURCH : BELL TOLLS.

Enter the procession surmounted with white plumes, borne slowly along the nave, and rests under the centre arch.

The Dirge.—Chorus drawn up on each side.

Rise, Rise !
Heart-breaking sighs,
The woe-fraught bosom swell ;
For sighs alone,
And dismal mean,
Should echo Juliet's knell.

AIR.

She's gone—the sweetest flower of May,
That blooming blest our sight :
Those eyes, which shone like breaking day,
Are set in endless night !

CHORUS.
Rise, Rise ! &c.

AIR.

She's gone, she's gone ; nor leaves behind
So fair a form, so pure a mind.—
How couldst thou, Death, at once destroy
The lover's hope, the parents' joy ?

CHORUS.
Rise, Rise ! &c.

AIR.

Thou spotless soul, look down below,
Our unfeign'd sorrow see !
O, give us strength to bear our woe,
To bear the loss of thee !

CHORUS.
Rise, Rise ! &c.
[Exeunt Omnes L.]

Among the too subtle theorisings of which *Romeo and Juliet* has been the subject, there is one which places the love story in a position subsidiary to the contests of the Montagues and Capulets, and the consequent conditions of Verona life which the play exhibits. This is to put the background in front. The background, however, was very important in Shakespeare's eyes, and the great attention paid to it in the Lyceum representation goes far to extend over

the whole story the interest which stage usage has limited to the vicissitudes of Romeo and Juliet's love, and to certain episodes—the Queen Mab speech, the fun with Peter and the Nurse, and one or two others. Only to such a performance could the Prologue be a fit introduction ; to such a performance its restoration gives especial meaning. In its leading reference to the feud between the two great families, and the scenes of civic meeting arising out of it, is provided the setting for the tragic jewel—the "piteous overthrows" of the "star-crossed lovers," who "with their death bury their parents' strife." This setting has generally been neglected, with the result of exalting the story into a region of supernal elevation above common life which Shakespeare did not seek in this play to reach, and of suppressing or slurring over points of uncompromising reality upon which his faithful truthfulness insisted.

The effect of the prologue is immediately developed by the remarkable first scene. Pictorially it is a very striking "set" of the market-place of Verona, carefully and agreeably softened by shade and by a central fountain, giving a delightful feeling of repose, while beyond over a bridge is seen the glaring brilliancy of the unshaded sunny atmosphere. Throughout the play the management of the lighting is a thing wholly new in its perfect and accurate graduation, and here in the first scene we have the first example of it in the creation of what the *Spectator* well described as "an atmosphere." In a few moments, when the coming turmoil has passed, we shall feel how valuable is the tone of ease and comparative shade which this scene preserves, so that Romeo can half sit loungingly against the fountain while he reads the list of guests, and all the characters can talk out their talk, some of which is very contemplative, without the audience having a feeling that the place is altogether unsuitable for such confidences.

Even when the faction-tumult begins no one leaps out of the frame. Gregory and Sampson, Abraham and Balthasar are not grotesque spouters, but members of a crowd. Swiftly upon their encounter there ensues a street conflict, the vigour, the fierceness, and the simulated confusion of which are so life-like that the spectator holds his breath until the fray is stilled. The trumpets of the Prince's retinue as he appears on the bridge at the back of the stage at the very height of the broil have an effect somewhat resembling, only the occasion is more vulgar, the celebrated trumpet sound in the great prison scene in *Fidelio*. After the Prince's speech, delivered amidst the dead silence of the awed multitude, the factions and the citizens disperse murmuring, but rapidly, as if meaning to settle their differences at once elsewhere, and then, by a transition very naturally managed the subjective Romeo becomes first the theme and then the principal figure. It is Mr. Irving's reading of the part that Romeo throughout the play is never heart-whole; and the language in which he is spoken of before his appearance by his father and Benvolio, and the fantastic sentimental incoherency of his first speech when he appears sustain this conception. The manner of the actor, however, distinguishes well between the more subjective and fanciful infatuation under which Romeo is first seen and his subsequent objective passion for Juliet; and this is one of the striking points which he is enabled to make by restoring Rosaline. It is accentuated by a pleasant incident when Capulet's servitor comes by and begs Romeo's help to read the list of guests to be summoned to the feast. As Romeo reads the names down with listless good nature, just after describing to Benvolio his very egoistic love troubles, his eye lights and his tongue lingers on the name of Rosaline. Presently, at Benvolio's suggestion, Romeo resolves to go to the Capulet feast, not as Benvolio

wishes, that he may compare his love with other ladies, "but to rejoice in splendour of his own." We shall see anon how effectively this restored element in the exordium, so to speak, of the play, made to yield its full significance by intelligent foresight in acting, leads up to the situation at the banquet as Shakespeare conceived it. In all the Lyceum productions certain improvements of the stage management and illuminations of the text have been made which will become traditions; and the various interesting details which belong to or are associated with the Rosaline episode are conspicuous examples of this honourable feature of the management.

In the second scene, however, the pretty loggia of Capulet's house, we have first to see Juliet and her Nurse. The garrulity of the latter, the marriage proposals of Lady Capulet, and the few words spoken by Juliet, are soon over. There is just time to note the beauty of the heroine, and then the loggia passes away softly and silently, and the outside of Capulet's house is revealed. This is the scene of the entrance of the Romeo party, and deserves mention for being made to minister to reality, instead of, as commonly it is, being conspicuously awkward and artificial. What can be more natural than this group of sumptuous youngsters under the torchlight, mustering for their coming merry exploit in entering Capulet's mansion uninvited? How well the wit and fancy of Mercutio support the gaiety of the freak, for which Romeo has prepared himself by a written speech. Observe, too, that amidst all the lightsomeness Romeo describes himself as having a soul of lead; and when Benvolio urges the party to enter lest they should be too late, Romeo exclaims—

I fear too early, for my mind misgives
Some consequence yet hanging in the stars,
Shall bitterly begin his fearful date
With this night's revels:
But He, that hath the steerage of my course,
Direct my sail.

This, of course, may only be an expedient of the poet to prepare the mind of the audience, but it may deserve passing remark that the ill-foreboding hero of the text contrasts curiously with the serene and glowing Romeo who is some people's ideal, and coincides much more nearly with the more pensive rendering which Mr. Irving has preferred.

The scene of the masque is a blaze of splendour with every accessory consistent with the period to make it magnificent and striking. The grouping and ungrouping and regrouping of the characters, the free course of a real seeming festivity, the quaint architectural structure of the banqueting hall, the permissible and indeed laudable care that has been taken in blending the colours of the costumes so that the seeming chance-mingling shall bring together no incongruities, and the half-dreamy gracefulness and genuine domesticity of the dancing, combine to produce an extraordinary ensemble.

As a detail of "business," technically so called, what could be sweeter or more significant than Juliet's natural unobtrusive toying with the children, and the easy terms they are on with her. To those who know not the play, it is a pretty accessory to the scene of family festivity. To those who know the play, how touching this almost last opportunity for natural and unpreoccupied cheerfulness that Juliet is destined to have.

This scene, however, will be historically remarkable chiefly because of the daring imaginative importation into it of an incident entirely consistent with the plan of the play and the theory of Romeo's character in the pre-Juliet period, but very startling to those who are familiar only with the acting versions. I have several times said, in writing about Irving, that his most distinguishing characteristic is the thoughtful subtlety with which he acts in one scene with inner reference to another, and so as it were by collation

brings into consistency and *rapport* all the phases of a character. In this instance it is not so much harmonisation that is studied. The audacious aim of the actor is to place in the strongest possible light that sudden transition of affection from Rosaline to Juliet—from disconsolate yearning and love-famine to the instinctive appropriation and assumption of glowing, mutually responsive passion—which to those who never knew, or have forgotten what young love is, is a difficulty in understanding the play. Irving by no means clears up the point. It would be a most un-Shakespearian attempt to try. But he knows what Shakespeare devised, and I suppose he believes that Shakespeare did not devise it thoughtlessly or mechanically. The poet, it may fairly be imagined, takes Romeo to the Capulets' feast, led by the hope of being near and contemplating Rosaline. Our poet-actor first accentuates this fact, as already mentioned, by the scene with Capulet's servant in the market-place, and then at the mask, instead of incontinently dropping all thought of Rosaline, as the invariable usage has been, ventures to display in dumb show to the audience the sudden transference of thought and emotion which must have taken place.

Those who follow Irving's conception of the part throughout—without dwelling on trivialities of manner and person, which in him, as in most great English actors, have afforded the crowd much idle occupation—will feel that it is all led up to by the restoration of Rosaline, and the truer, while more pensive and less merely pretty view of his character, which is by that means afforded. Romeo is a bold lover, no doubt, in that he will do all and dare all to obtain the delight of loving and being loved; but he is not one to be bold or strident in the presence of the beloved one. He is of that mould of man to whom—perhaps throughout life, but certainly during a long period of it—the worship of some woman is an essential of being; and

his love is fuller of worship than of any other quality. He has worshipped distantly, ruefully, despondingly, distractingly, the cold or unmoved (perhaps unattempted) Rosaline. He still loves her when he comes brooding and sentimentalising to the mask. As Irving enters, his eye wanders in search of Rosaline. Once found she is the cynosure of his rapt gaze. But presently, as if in fatigue, he turns listlessly from this wistful melancholy contemplation, and then and there is, as it were, struck statue-like by the beauty and charm of the unknown girl who is to be his fate. It is a change as sudden as that of Faust from age to youth. As he stands there immobile, the love of Rosaline falls unconsciously from him, and he is changed in the twinkling of an eye, or rather without the twinkling of an eye, into the glory and glamour of his new adoration, which is to make him—in spite of this cataclysm of fickleness—the ideal lover of all future ages.

Whether human life is worth exploring in detail or not may be matter for debate, but there are few things, out of Browning, which explore it as such acting of Shakespeare, and the thought which it prompts. These restored Rosaline passages lead up to the tremors of Irving's Romeo in the balcony scene. The key-note is worship—yearning, tremulous worship. He adores his love; only slowly realises that he can be adored by her; and when he knows it almost sinks in the sweetness of it. Such a lover is surely more intensely and truly a lover—at any rate more intensely and truly Romeo—than the mere bright-spoken physical fascinatör whom many playgoers prefer. The airy, petting, protecting gallant suitor is much more likely to be loved than to languish for love—to be a loveless Lovelace (did old Richardson mean a pun!) or at best a gracious Bassanio, than a stricken Romeo or a lamenting Hamlet.

Anticipating for a moment the

extreme of intensity in Irving's soft and sensitive love-making in the balcony scene—which not only is truer than other renderings to Romeo's self-renouncing, self-surrendering character, but realises better the fearsomeness and adventure of the balcony situation in which the lover's life is actually at stake—if I am asked how so wistful and trembling a Romeo, whose speeches in the garden are, as George Meredith has said of another, “the breath of love, delicate, tender, alive with enamoured bashfulness,” could so boldly essay Juliet at the ball, the explanation lies in the sudden excitement of a new passion, or at least a new amorous enterprise, and in the innocent license of his masquerading exploit as a pilgrim. And in case it should be argued that Shakespeare did not mean Romeo's new love to be thus sudden and had no reason for it, let me ask why he departed in this particular from the tale as it was told to him. Juliet's passion was equally sudden, and so strong that she thought that her grave was like to be her wedding bed if he were married. Miss Terry gives emphatic force to this wild devotion. “Other young men,” said Rousseau's Julie to her lover, “had seemed to me handsomer and finer men than you. None of them caused me the least emotion. My heart was yours at first sight.”

The pretty and very natural scene where Benvolio and Mercutio skirt the wall of Capulet's garden in pursuit of their friend is a prelude to the yet more exquisite scene in the garden. The chastened beauty of it is delightful. The foliage, the low balustrade overlooking the tree-tops of the deep contiguous orchard, the firm and simple, but graceful pillared balcony, the avoidance of newness in the architecture, the trailing of the shrubs, the delicious lighting, all help the atmosphere of the situation more than it has ever been helped before, and when Juliet appears on the balcony we feel that she has entered into the very domain which the poet would

have desired for her at this moment in her story.

I will not attempt to follow in detail—for nothing is in such a case so wearisome—the rendering of this scene by Miss Terry, whose very idiosyncasy seems to be identified with the frank and romantic qualities of Juliet's courtship. There can be no doubt that it was Shakespeare's bold yet delicate aim to conciliate to English audiences a type of young female character as alien from their ordinary sympathies as it is fraught with delicious beauties of instinct, sentiment, and fancy. And never can there have been a lovely female form, a thrilling and quivering yet pure, receptive, and expressive female intelligence, better equipped by idiosyncracy to fulfil the imaginative mission of Shakespeare's Juliet than Miss Ellen Terry. She looks one of those sweetly royal women who can do no wrong. The ingenuous unreserve of her love avowals, the boldness of her wedding plans, the ardent anticipations of her nuptials, the rapturous worship of the perfect lover of her fancy seem to need no apology from temperament, climate, or country. They are, and they are hers; as delightful as the glowing yet chaste language in which the poet has expressed them. The impersonation of the actress at this point is as sweet and pure and earnest as is the embodiment of Juliet's rare and strangely kindled mind in Shakespeare's fervid text. It is a triumph of very special gifts of person, artistic temperament, and mind.

The leading idea of Irving's Romeo has already been indicated. From the banquet to the vault Romeo's fickleness or shallowness is seen no more. To a man of his nature there can be no fickleness, nor any detachment, while there is response. His love must be ecstatic. It will not be advised, or compelled, or dispelled. It drinks in true delights through the eyes which once drank in hallucination. The very voice of the lover is not so much tremulous as faint and sinking in

the exhaustion of love's sweet anguish. It is thus, I think, that Irving plays the scene in the garden, and from it dates all the acting which follows. He loses himself in his love. Defrauded of Juliet, or debarred from her, he is fierce and desperate, admits no conference of prudence, is swift to rush upon any tragic consequence, wild in his forlorn hysterics, or manful, direct and keen in his resolves and proceedings. Give him Juliet, be it even in the midst of peril, where he can flash through the moonlit trees to her presence, or even with the oncoming certainty of blank separation in the early morning of the bedchamber scene, and he is all gentleness, obedience, absorption, submission. Some writers have talked about protective friendship and maturity, forsooth. Whatever the outward seeming this is essential youth; youth neither of years nor character, but of passion; a youth which never ages until all such love paroxysms have passed. Such youth, because such love, but not mere youth without such love, Shakespeare meant to depict. It is not a very common sort of love in masculine England, where even pleading lovers are often very masterful; but it is a type of love that lends itself, as Shakespeare shows us, to most poetical presentment, and, as Irving shows us, affords a great histrionic artist (though in a part not specially his own, and the youthful aspect and movements of which he cannot possibly simulate) scope for most thoughtful acting.

To the balcony scene succeeds the monastery, also distinguished by excellent architectural effect, and having an ingenious cloistral arrangement. The principle of the representation throughout is that the imagination of the spectator is to be helped to glide from scene to scene, not only by the unwonted silence of the scene-shifting, and by architectural solidity, accuracy, and good taste, but also by any and every resource that may adventitiously bring help to the sensorium. Such is the tolling bell and the undertoned

miserere in the monastery scenes. Such is the literally baking sun in the street scene where Mercutio is slain, relieved by the cool passage in the distance beneath foliage-covered trellis-work. Such is the incident of Peter, the Nurse's attendant, when he has returned hot and fretted with his pettish old mistress, passing out and being seen from the loggia to walk through the adjacent orchard, and casually pluck fruit from the trees as he goes by them. Such too is the very welcome new stage arrangement by which in the scene where the nurse finds Romeo, Benvolio, Mercutio, and he are seen sitting on a bench under the shade of a tree, instead of uncomfortably standing and reciting their parts at the footlights. This last improvement avoids a great absurdity—or a great little absurdity—which has hitherto existed, and which may even seem to lurk in the text—Romeo's non-recognition of the Nurse whom he perfectly well knows, and at the sight of whom all his faculties would be on the alert. At the Lyceum he does not see her till after the careless words, "I am the youngest of that name for want of a better," being engaged with his back turned in easy conversation with Benvolio. The minute and intelligent care involved in this detail of stage management is just as significant as many a much greater achievement.

This is the proper place to pay a brief tribute to the Nurse of Mrs. Stirling, which is a wonderful piece of elaborate and unctuous acting. Such perfection of mechanism is rarely seen. Every muscle, every expression, every syllable of the mellow voice is obedient to the will of the artist, and the result is that one of the most amusing, natural, and irresistible old women ever imagined lives before you, treads the stage, and asserts a phenomenal importance in the action of the play.

Under the "baking sun" of the first scene in the third act takes place an episode in which a true instinct of the actor brings out faithfully an ele-

ment of Romeo's love-life which has hitherto been almost overlooked. Nothing Irving does is shallow. And Romeo is not shallow, though the part has too often been shallowly played and shallowly written about, as if Romeo were a mere figure in a pretty idyll, in which psychological truth was not to be looked for. This is how Shakespeare found the story; it is not how he left it. He so treated it as to show us not only its beauty, not only its beauty *plus* its tragedy, not only the beauty and the tragedy *plus* the domestic and clan embroilment of love; but also something else, appertaining more to feebler and less strenuous, but still real and important aspects of character; germane, indeed, to the principal love motive, but as illustrating the lapse into futility of character which is apt to occur when the whole being is rapturously taken possession of by a great passion.

Romeo was from love what Hamlet was from irresistible weird circumstances and native irresolution. He has the makings of a fine character, but, so far as the story was permitted to go, love reduced him to be the mere toy and waif of temporary surgings and billows, with no more power than a rudderless bark, or a bark with its head held by a wild infatuated helmsman hard on to the rocks.

Now, note the scene in which Tybalt tries to fasten a quarrel on Romeo, and observe how Romeo, a young gallant of a stormy, sword-drawing period, is affected by the circumstances in which he secretly stands:

Tyb. Romeo, the hate I bear thee can afford
No better term than this—Thou art a villain.
Rom. Tybalt, the reason that I have to love thee
Doth much excuse the appertaining rage
To such a greeting. Villain am I none;
Therefore, farewell; I see thou know'st me not.
[Going.
Tyb. Boy, this shall not excuse the injuries
That thou hast done me; therefore, turn and draw.

Rom. I do protest I never injur'd thee;
But love thee better than thou canst devise
Till thou shalt know the reason of my love:

And so, good Capulet—which name I tender
As dearly as my own—be satisfied.

Merc. O calm, dishonourable, vile submis-
sion!

A la stoccata carries it away.

[Draws.

This scene is usually played without giving any hint of how Romeo's fibre has been weakened, how his standard of conduct has been lowered beneath that of his friends, that of his world, and that of his own customary judgment, by the monopoly which love has obtained of his mind, and by the peculiar relations which he is necessarily in with those of Juliet's kin and faction. The impression usually produced has been that of a very superior young man, too amiable and dignified, and too much possessed by thoughts of higher things, to be capable of engaging in broils; and this impression is often deepened by the gallant and imposing bearing which actors of better presence than insight are likely at this point to sustain. As Shakespeare, however, so the Lyceum representative of Shakespeare's hero, fully intends us to behold the seamy side even of this beautiful love-story, and to know that there is a seamy side to it in character as well as in misfortune. Irving gives the speeches to Tybalt with a sort of abject anxiety to avoid a rupture, which brings vividly and painfully to the spectators' minds the difficulty in which he is placed as a Montague by having fallen in love with Juliet, and which by its conspicuous falling short from the customary sword-drawing manliness and gallantry, fully justifies the indignation manifested by Mercutio. Nay, it afterwards brings Romeo's own condemnation on himself, though he knows all the circumstances, and must make all the allowance for them that stress of self-reproaching emotion will permit. For when, first having shirked his own quarrel, he has caused Mercutio, who has taken it up, to be slain through his fussy and pottering interference, he exclaims—

This gentleman, the Prince's near ally,
My very friend, hath got his mortal hurt
In my behalf; my reputation's stain'd

With Tybalt's slander—Tybalt, that an hour
Hath been my kinsman—O sweet Juliet,
Thy beauty hath made me effeminate,
And in my temper softened valour's steel.

The bringing out, for the first time, as I believe, of the full meaning of this lament by previous profound indications of almost mean submissiveness to Tybalt, is another of those noteworthy achievements which Irving accomplishes by dint of entirely unconventional, inquisitive, unfettered honesty; by keen insight and fidelity to essential facts of character developed by incident.

A touch more likely to be understood and felt by audiences, and legitimately telling in effect, is the killing of Tybalt with Mercutio's own sword, which Romeo snatches up from the ground with deadly intent, as he is impelled, nay, compelled, to avenge upon the fiery flouter the death of his friend.

It is, perhaps, a fault that the citizens crowd too quickly on the vacated scene, after Romeo and Benvolio have fled, but it may be remembered in palliation that the news of the previous combat will have spread very rapidly through the city.

Juliet's soliloquy and the tempestuous scene with the Nurse, both occurring in the loggia, and Romeo's passionate colloquy with the Friar, the second and third scenes of the third act, may be passed over here because they call simply for tragic power, upon which, unless there be some special instance of originality, description must be inadequately and unprofitably employed. The excellent solidity of the stone-built "secret place in the monastery" deserves a word of commendation. Juliet's chamber is the next scene of interest, and it is first revealed in the beautiful light of an Italian day-break. It is a room altogether natural and unstagey, and yet in every particular most beautiful—an L-shaped room, with the front of the stage for its base, while the long part retreats upon the left towards the bed and a window beyond, and on the right the audience face a nearer window looking

out over the city amid luxurious foliage, fair and sweet in the morning air. The room is seen under three lights, and this is the first of them. In the just awakening dawn stand Romeo and Juliet, contriving or meditating how to part.

Of the acting of this episode of quivering anxiety and love, I will only say that while the Juliet is all that Juliet can be, the Romeo makes the dialogue more probable, while not less intense, than it has usually been made.

Beautiful as is the conversation in which Juliet plays upon the doubt whether it is the nightingale or the lark that sings at the moment of the forlorn bride and bridegroom's parting, there is in its composition a troubling strain of artifice. No one ever felt it to be perfectly natural, though many have been excusably indifferent as to whether it was natural or not. Somewhat may be allowed for Coleridge's suggestion that the whole play was meant to approach a poem; but one would prefer that it should not approach a poem so nearly as to be dramatically unreal. Now the key to the right recital of this awkward piece of dialogue probably is, that as Juliet is prone to indulge and to follow, even in most serious crises, the fanciful conceits of her own mind; so it is suggested by the quaint, acquiescent, imitative elocution of Irving in this nightingale episode, that Romeo, in conformity with his character and in consistency with all the plaintive knightliness of his love, falls in with Juliet's conceits. This is a very ingenious as it is a very ingenuous solution of what has always seemed a difficulty, and gives a new and sincerer feeling to the hitherto artificial-seeming beauties of the lines. Even in the very agony of the final parting at the window, Juliet's fancy is still the channel of her grief. As he descends she exclaims—and in what tones!—

Methinks I see thee, now thou art below,
As one dead in the bottom of a tomb:
Either my eyesight fails or thou look'st pale.

And Romeo's fancy still is stirred,

though gloomily and to the dregs of bitterness—

Trust me, love, in my eye so do you :
Dry sorrow drinks our blood.

That beautiful upper chamber, seen under so many exquisitely different lights, reminds one how even mere artistic mounting may help criticism at points where it has faltered. In spite of much raggedness and staginess of accessories, the loveliness of the morning escape, and the grandeur of Juliet's potion scene, have always been recognised; but in Coleridge's charming notes on this play, he puts a sort of query against the fifth scene of the fourth act, where the Nurse discovers Juliet, as she supposes, dead, on coming to wake her on the morning of her expected wedding with the County Paris. He says:—

As the audience know that Juliet is not dead, this scene is, perhaps, excusable. But it is a strong warning to minor dramatists not to introduce at one time many separate characters agitated by one and the same circumstance. It is difficult to understand what effect, whether that of pity or of laughter, Shakespeare meant to produce—the occasion and the characteristic speeches are so little in harmony! For example, what the Nurse says is excellently suited to the Nurse's character, but grotesquely unsuited to the occasion.

Great as is Coleridge's authority, no one will attach much validity to these observations who has found Shakespeare justified against him by the reality and the poignant interest of this scene as arranged at the Lyceum; as played so wonderfully by Mrs. Stirling, with every detail of characteristic behaviour; and as heightened by the luminous Verona morning, which pervades the room, as it were, with more than its own serene, cool light—with the very truest domestic essence of a story which, however it "approached a poem," was firmly intended by its author to be kept within the atmosphere of home reality. The previous wedding chant without and the incidents which succeed the discovery of the death, as the entrance and kneeling of the troop of bridesmaids, are dramatically

beautiful and quite consistent with the spirit of the situation.

To dilate upon parts of the performance in which what has been well done before is well done now is not within the intention of this article, but in glancing back at the especial points of success in the bedchamber scenes, two occur to me as distinctive of this representation. One is the aid given by Miss Terry's acting, in co-operation with the arrangement and darkening of the stage in the potion scene, to the ghostly effect of the soliloquy in which Juliet expatiates in the supposed horrors of the vault. The faint hues and lines of the dim room seem to blend with her imaginings in a spectral manner which is notably appropriate and thrilling. The other point is antecedent to this, and is due solely to a fine impulse of the Juliet. The moral revolt of the fair young newly-married wife from the vile, though matter-of-fact—all the viler because matter-of-fact—suggestion of the Nurse that she should throw Romeo over and marry Paris, has not in my recollection been enacted with such natural energy and dignity. Without any sign or likelihood of its being so intended, it as it were insures Juliet, in an instant of self-revelation, from any shade of suspicion that her unquestionable warmth of temperament is uncompanioned by that single-hearted devotion by which passion is redeemed and sublimated. Besides all her other merits Miss Terry has especially this: she makes people feel that whatever she enacts, that, for the time being, she is, from the centre of her heart to the tips of her fingers.

The decoration of the first scene of the fifth act at the Lyceum Theatre is a most successful effort of the scene-painter. The place represented, a sort of retired poor street approached by a covered entry, is somewhat squalid, but picturesque. And once again the management has been very successful in atmosphere. This scene realises the sleepy sultriness of an Italian back street on a holiday, as other

scenes have realised broiling heat, and cool shade, and rosy morning, and exquisite night, kissed tenderly by "the moon that tips with silver all these fruit-tree tops." The impressive elocution of Irving's conversation with the haggard Apothecary has been unanimously and without controversy applauded, and the whole scene with the unwilling and yet scarcely reluctant seller of poison is very impressive. But I avail myself of the scene to offer an observation on a characteristic of this performance which will always be remembered in tradition, and which will probably somewhat alter the traditions of the part of Romeo. It is at the opening of the scene in the Apothecary's miserable street that Romeo utters almost the only cheerful lines which Shakespeare has given him. Has this been generally recognised?

One critic has said that Romeo has been conceived at the Lyceum in a quite new light—meaning that the rendering is too lugubrious. But he naïvely enough goes on to quote the lines in which Romeo is described as

With tears augmenting the fresh morning dew,
Adding to clouds more clouds with his deep
sighs;

and it would puzzle his ingenuity to show that Romeo ever had many moments in which he could naturally throw his nighted colour off. Romeo's courting is clandestine and most anxious. His marriage is secret. His nuptial visit to his bride's chamber does not take place till he has killed her cousin, and been sentenced to banishment. In this particular, and others which greatly enrich the drama, Shakespeare has departed from the original story so as to accentuate the anxious view of Romeo's situation; and except at the moment when he finds the Friar astonishingly complaisant in expediting the wedding, there is scarcely an opportunity for that boyish exuberance of poetic gallantry which some seem to think the spirit of the part. The most buoyant lines in the play, and almost in any play,

are those of which I just now spoke, delivered outside the Apothecary's house before there is any reason for Romeo's remembering whereabouts he dwells.

My bosom's lord sits lightly in his throne ;
And all this day an unaccustomed spirit
Lifts me above the ground with cheerful
thoughts.

And when are these words uttered ? When Balthasar is just arriving with the news of Juliet's supposed death. The poet, it would seem, would not allow his hero to have even a false presentiment of happiness—would not let him even taste the rich joy of love's shadows—without cruelly insisting on the altogether sad drift and purpose of the action. If the last Romeo is sadder than others, may it not be because he has more truly felt the circumstances and obligatory mood of the character ?

From this point the tragedy may be said to plunge rather than to hasten to its dreadful conclusion. A moment or two with the half-frenzied Friar, to realise to us the complication of misfortunes which has kept Romeo in ignorance of the potion-device, and then we are in the churchyard before the tomb of the Capulets. Such a scene—so fit, so real—has never been seen. The painted part fulfils all that can be desired for the appropriate sentiment of the situation. The built part in its strong solidity, its majestic proportions, its genuine resistance to the crowbar, meets equally important requisitions of the mind. There have no doubt been incidents of over-realism, and they have not all been very recent. It was felt to be an excess, I am told and can well believe, when Macready introduced the sound of singing birds in the Forest of Arden in *As You Like It*. But the public taste is ready to welcome and justify progress in realism, or at least increasing avoidance of unreality, as dramatic art advances; and finds that such improvements contribute both to the illusion and to the poetry of theatrical scenes. People do not realise how striking and serviceable,

though often very simple, are such changes in stage appointments. I remember sitting in the stalls with the late T. W. Robertson no longer ago than the performance of the *Long Strike*. One of the characters made his exit through a door, and flung it to behind him. It closed with a clang. It had a real catch and handle. That this had never been done before I cannot positively assert, but it was amusing to hear Robertson say with unction, "To think that I have lived to hear that sound on the stage at last!" Those who remember the unreal way in which exits and entrances used to be made through doors, and the preposterous shamming which went on when a door had to be fastened, though they may not share Robertson's triumphant feeling, will admit that there is no relation between conspicuous unreality and dramatic effect; and that when a certain realistic innovation has been made, the old fashion becomes for ever intolerable. Never again shall we behold a Romeo pretending to labour away at wrenching open a visibly fragile lath and plaster "flat."

Instead of beholding Juliet on her bier, as soon as the "detestable maw" has been thrown open, all that is seen is a darksome entrance to a subterranean vault, which arrangement, and the surprising plan of the next scene, may probably have been suggested to Mr. Irving by the lines in the speech to Balthasar before the attack on the tomb—

Why I descend into this bed of death,
Is partly to behold my lady's face, &c.

When the curtains part for the last time but one, they disclose a vault of vast proportions, nobly groined, with a massive stone staircase winding its way upwards through the darkness in the rear to the very top of the stage, where the moonlight is seen streaming in aslant at the entrance which Romeo has just broken open. In the centre lies Juliet, and near her under a crimson pall—another instance of close

observation of the text—the corpse of her slain kinsman, soon to be apostrophised by Romeo:

Tybalt, liest thou there in thy bloody sheet?

The entrance of Romeo from the lofty doorway and by the gloomy descent is a little melodramatic perhaps, because he drags the body of Paris, but only melodramatic because this cannot really be carried out, and the mind is painfully conscious that it is only carried out in appearance. Thus far the bringing down of Paris's body may be pronounced a mistake; but it is truly in accordance with the text—

Give me thy hand
One writ with me in sour misfortune's book.
I'll bury thee in a triumphant grave—

and is not in ill accord with Romeo's idiosyncrasy. Read in a poetical description it would be tragic as well as ghastly. I doubt if it can be made so consistently with the striking arrangement of this scene, and the peculiar effect of Romeo's entrance from the lofty summit of the staircase.

The pathos of the concluding speeches and actions of the lovers, purged of all the puling sentimentalities of the ordinary version, is achieved with simplicity and power; and when Juliet has died the curtains meet once more, as the distant hubbub of the roused citizens comes nearer and nearer to the mouth of the charnel-house. Last scene of all, the same vaulted mausoleum, with the Prince and the Capulets and the Montagues assembled in its depths, while thronging the staircase and occupying every point of vantage, with blazing torches lighting up the expanse and making the gloom lurid, stand the multitudinous, silent, awe-struck citizens of fair Verona, whose greatest fame of all in the providence of genius it has been to have been

imagined to have witnessed the woes "of Juliet and her Romeo."

I will only say further that Friar Laurence, the pivot of the action, profits greatly both by the restoration of the Rosaline passages, and in the illustrations, Mr. Irving's acting of the reduction of life to valuelessness, except for poetry, by a too overmastering, though innocent and beautiful, affection. This grave and reverend character receives a riper air of sagacity, a sterner tone of ethical judgment, a more gracious tone of tolerant allowance, never sinking into weakness, though crushed eventually by the rude accidents of the world.

The Friar's wisdom could at any moment, and no doubt did at many, presage the probability of such disaster as may always attend the most innocent absolute surrender to a ruling passion young in its strength, and strong in its youth. Romeo absolutely yielded to the almost universal instinct of imaginative youth, and was repaid by an infinite wealth of love and beauty. But Friar Laurence knew all the same that Romeo had rushed upon his future by impulse, and that a future so challenged was likely to be full of fate. The mind has made love as it peopled heaven, even with its own desiring fantasy;¹ and where love has the absolute unquestioning mastery, it is for old monks and cold critics to look on and note the beauty of it, and the destiny of it, interwoven perhaps with accompanying failure and fatality, as too often seen in life; as reflected not less honestly than sublimely in Shakespeare; and as very worthily exhibited by those whose powers of histrionic divination enable them truly to read the depths of that faithful mirror.

EDWARD R. RUSSELL.

¹ *Childe Harold*, iv. 121.